MARVELLOUS MESOPOTAMIA

THE WORLD'S WONDERLAND

BY

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PREFACE

IMMEDIATELY after the outbreak of war I ventured to draw attention, by means of lectures, articles, and pamphlets, to the importance of Mesopotamia and the significance of Germany's Baghdad Railway schemes. The following pages contain the substance of my lectures, with some additional information more recently available. The different aspects of the country, its relation to current events and present-day problems, are here presented in language and style simple enough, I hope, to convey to the rising generation the impression that Mesopotamia must not be overlooked, since its settlement and development within the next fifty years will influence the whole world's future.

The American Continent will probably be affected as much as the Eastern hemisphere when the bulk of Europe's food supplies, cotton, and oil reach the Mediterranean by the new railways' waterways, and pipe lines from Mesopotamia and the East. The most important world-problems as well as the most fascinating developments of human existence will be associated for a century and more with the reconstruction of the Near East. This is where the ideals of the League of Nations

will be tested and put into practical operation; it is where Western civilisation will be compelled to come to an understanding with the Mohammedan world. Here also we shall observe the beginnings of a new era for the Jewish race, the Arab race, and the liberated Eastern Churches, while the most important outlets for Russia, Armenia, and the Caucasian Republics will be through the Black Sea and the Dardanelles. A satisfactory settlement of Mesopotamia will affect Constantinople, and will be of the greatest possible service towards the solution of so many other vital Near Eastern problems.

The world to-day is very different from what it was a century ago, and American statesmen will assuredly find it impossible to stand aloof and watch, as if from another planet, the greatest changes that have ever affected the fortunes of mankind. Active co-operation in the resettlement of the Ottoman Dominions would probably be one of the best ways in which America could serve the interests of humanity at such a time as this. The immense developments foreshadowed in the following pages will undoubtedly be delayed if America refuses to respond to the cries of Armenia and the pleas of her overburdened Allies; but American citizens will in due time as certainly rue the day when their statesmen refused a mandate for Asia Minor and declined to guard the golden gates of the world's wonderland.

British statesmen have considered the important question as to how much of Mesopotamia

could be safely evacuated by our military and civil administrators. Some urged our retirement to the confines of the Basra Vilayet, while the Prime Minister argued for the necessity of extending our aid to the limits of the Mosul boundaries. General E. G. Barrow, in a letter to the *Times*, wisely pointed out that a sincere attempt was made in 1915 to restrict our operations to the Basra Vilayet, but the position was untenable, and only the timely arrival of a second division of troops prevented our losing both Basra and the oil-fields at the battles of Shaiba. I believe we should need as many troops to hold the Basra Vilayet as would suffice to guard the more natural frontiers of the whole of Mesopotamia. If we allowed the Turks to return to Baghdad and Mosul, the Arabs would justly plead that we had betrayed our friends, who were promised emancipation from the Turk in return for co-operation with the Allies. Many prominent Arabs in Mesopotamia told me, before the war, that our apparent affection for the unspeakable Turk was to them incomprehensible. It is practically certain that the Turks could never keep order in the Mosul Vilayet, for Constantinople would be obliged to connive at the predatory habits of the Kurds as surely as it has permitted the ravages of the rebels in Cilicia. No Arab administration is possible at present without substantial assistance from some European Power; and, moreover, a prime necessity for Mesopotamia is the opening up of secure communications with the

Mediterranean Sea, which are only feasible from the vilayets of Baghdad and Mosul. It would also be difficult for a Mandatory Power to make the country self-supporting without a large capital outlay, and consequently adequate control of the remunerative mineral and agricultural resources available in the northern parts of Mesopotamia. There would be no advantage to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia, and the whole of Europe would suffer from our evacuation of the Baghdad and Mosul Vilayets.

There is apparently no doubt whatsoever that the British administrators are fully determined to place the government of the country in the hands of the Arabs, and that their supervision will be strictly limited to the spirit and letter of all that is meant by a mandate, which is so clearly enunciated in the principles of the League of Nations.

To accuse the British Authorities of unrestrained Imperialism and selfish land-grabbing is a most mischievous misrepresentation of the unique services rendered to civilisation by the British race. We have always borne the heaviest share of those burdens which civilised nations cannot afford to shun, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia will be the first to benefit from the new responsibilities which the British are bound to assume on behalf of the civilised world.

It is hardly necessary to add that the Mesopotamia to which I refer in these pages is not

"the land between the two rivers," as the name implies, but the whole "land of Irak," comprising the former Turkish vilayets of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra.

I have added a list of books and periodicals to which I am indebted for some of my information, and I offer my sincere apologies for the omissions and imperfections of so inadequate a treatment of this fascinating and important subject.

April 1920.

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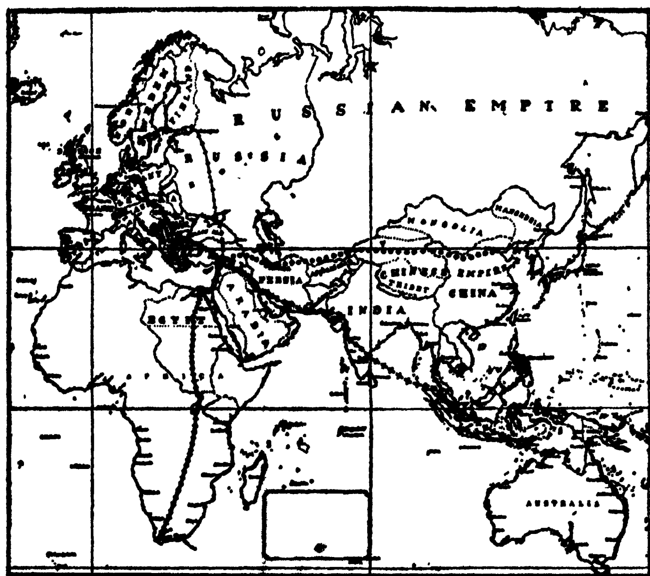
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POPULATION OF MESOPOTAMIA

THE revised figures of a recently completed census of Mesopotamia show the total population of the country to be 2,849,282.

The following are the detailed figures :—

Division.	Sunni.	Shi'ah.	Jewish.	Christian.	Other Religions.	Total.
Baghdad .	130,000	54,000	50,000	15,000	1,000	250,000
Samarra .	66,455	14,215	300	...	...	80,970
Dialah . .	54,953	46,097	1,689	397	900	104,036
Kût . .	8,578	98,712	381	127	...	107,798
Diwaniyah .	1,000	192,300	6,000	5,000	200	204,500
Shamiyah .	445	189,000	530	20	5	190,000
Hillah . .	15,983	155,897	1,065	27	28	173,000
Dulaim . .	247,000	200	2,600	200	...	250,000
	524,414	750,421	62,565	20,771	2,133	1,360,304
Basra . .	24,408	130,494	6,928	2,221	1,549	165,600
Amara . .	7,000	284,700	3,000	300	5,000	300,000
Muntafik .	11,150	306,220	160	30	2,440	320,000
	42,558	721,414	10,088	2,551	8,989	785,600
Mosul . .	244,713	17,180	7,635	50,670	30,180	350,378
Arbil . .	96,100	...	4,800	4,100	1,000	106,000
Kirkuk . .	85,000	5,000	1,400	600	...	92,000
Suleimanie .	153,900	...	1,000	100	...	155,000
	579,713	22,180	14,835	55,470	31,180	703,378
Total .	1,146,685	1,494,015	87,488	78,792	42,302	2,849,282



THE NEAR EAST

Marvellous Mesopotamia

The World's Wonderland

CHAPTER I

THE VALUE OF MESOPOTAMIA

MESOPOTAMIA is destined to occupy the attention of various classes of people in the British Empire for many years to come, not only because of the administrative responsibilities that have fallen upon us, but chiefly because of the unique part this country is likely to play in the reconstruction of both Europe and Asia.

Mesopotamia will always be associated with some of the darkest days, the saddest memories, and the greatest sacrifices of the War. The rapid advance to Basra filled us with hope, the muddles revealed by the Mesopotamian Commission covered us with shame, the surrender of Kût brought us to the verge of despair; the deportation of the Armenians to Mesopotamia was one of the greatest horrors of human history; the capture of Baghdad was one of those brilliant achievements which turned the tide

of the great conflict and shattered the most cherished ambitions of our foes. The subsequent development of Mesopotamia under a British military administration is acknowledged to be a masterpiece of efficient organisation, and many eminent men are now giving their best attention to the prospects and problems of a country which some pronounce to be a "white elephant," and others believe will become a most prosperous adjunct of the British Empire.

The value of Mesopotamia cannot be justly estimated solely from its mineral and other material resources, from the nature of its soil or the number and character of its present inhabitants. It is necessary to survey these in conjunction with other more important interests and advantages. The few critics who speak disparagingly of Mesopotamia have overlooked its most valuable assets, and their criticism, which is chiefly concentrated upon its agricultural prospects, has added nothing to what is already known. The difficulties of developing this neglected country have been well considered by many distinguished experts. In spite of all that can be urged to the contrary, they still claim enormous possibilities for its mineral and agricultural resources.

History supports the contention of those who deny that the irrigated lands became "salted" and were consequently made desolate and useless thousands of years ago. It is a well-known fact that Baghdad under the Khalifs was one of the

finest cities of the world, in spite of its "salted" suburbs, and as recently as the sixth century A.D. there were ten millions of people living upon the produce of a country where nine-tenths of this "salted soil" was then under cultivation.

Experiments also have been made by British agricultural experts upon over a million acres of land, with results that prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the certainty of remunerative returns from the grain-producing areas of Irak. In the first experiment the yield of 450,000 tons of grain was greatly in excess of what was anticipated, when the estimate given was "25,000 tons of wheat and 100,000 tons of barley, in addition to fair crops of other grain."

Another well-known fact is that the greater part of Lower Mesopotamia has *not* been irrigated for centuries, and it is probable that the "salted" condition of some of its plains is chiefly due to the incessant floods and the neglect of regulated irrigation, which should now, under scientific management, gradually restore fertility to these desolated regions.

It should also be remembered that only in the southern portion of Mesopotamia, the ancient land of Shinar, is irrigation required, where also more barley than wheat is grown; but north of a line from Hît to the Tigris there are extensive areas of good arable land, more suitable for wheat or cotton, where the rainfall is generally sufficient to bring the crops to maturity.

Experimental cotton gardens were laid out a few miles below Baghdad. Seeds were imported from different parts of the world; most of the tilling was done by women; a six inch high lift pump, driven by an oil engine, was fixed to the bank, and the water for the cotton fields was raised by earth channels. The type of cotton seed which seemed to thrive best was the "Middling American Upland," for which there is generally an immense demand. The yield was over 2000 lbs. of seed cotton to the acre, which is a much higher yield than that in India or Egypt. Four varieties of American seed were found to give the best results, and the specimens produced were described as "fairly long in staple, of good colour, and of high ginning percentage." The experiments fully proved that in large portions of Mesopotamia cotton can be grown of a longer staple and perhaps in greater quantities than anywhere else in the world. I have seen the cotton fields of India, Egypt, and Asia Minor; but the fields that impressed me most were those I saw fifteen years ago in the neighbourhood of Mosul, where scientific experiments have not yet been made. It seems to be the almost unanimous opinion of our best agricultural experts that Mesopotamia could easily become one of the greatest granaries and one of the finest cotton-producing countries in the world.

Even from an agricultural point of view, the value of Mesopotamia will not depend entirely upon its grain or cotton productivity. There is no other

country that can compete with its date groves, and its orange gardens could be indefinitely extended. Model farms and vegetable gardens have been organised with most profitable results, while vast quantities of wool and liquorice were annually exported from Mesopotamia before the war.

Though the present population is exceedingly small, yet the evidences are abundant to justify the expectation that, under a decent government, there will be a steady increase fully commensurate with the needs of the country as it gradually develops. In less than three years the population of Basra, for example, increased nearly threefold: thousands of Arabs, who fled from Turkish oppression, having returned from India and elsewhere. All the other towns in Mesopotamia show signs of a substantial increase in numbers. Thousands of Indians were permanently domiciled in Kerbela, Kasmain, and Baghdad before the war; the pilgrims from Persia have enormously increased in numbers, and the sacred shrines will no doubt continue to attract many pilgrims and permanent settlers when the government has banished brigandage and blackmail from all the pilgrim roads. Some of the finest workers in Baghdad are the Christian Chaldeans who come from the villages in the north. If there is work to be done and decent pay to be had, the prolific Kurds will give up their predatory habits; for, in the absence of the patronage hitherto accorded them by the Turkish régime, they will be forced to provide sustenance for their large families by more

legitimate means. The enormous emigration of the Christian population which took place under the stress of persecution and oppression will also cease when security of life and adequate employment can be found in Mesopotamia. There is not the slightest cause for anticipating that the development of the country will be retarded on account of the sparseness of the population. Some of the same circumstances that will henceforth give a new value to Mesopotamia will also help to provide it with the necessary population.

This country will have a strategic value for many years to come, and must be occupied by a great civilised power while the world is passing through one of the most critical transitions of its history. The Berlin-Baghdad Railway was no fanciful enterprise; it threatened the existence of the British Empire, and we narrowly escaped annihilation by a timely recognition of the strategic importance of Mesopotamia.

The most obvious reason for placing the highest possible value upon Mesopotamia is its central geographical position in view of the development of overland traffic and the needs of aerial navigation. Here are the natural junctions for some of the greatest and busiest of the world's future highways. Multitudes of travellers will assuredly pass this way when journeying from almost any part of Europe to any part of Asia and Australasia. It is highly probable that the largest railway centres and the most important aerodromes will, within

a quarter of a century, be found in Mesopotamia, and then its value will be obvious to all.

The regeneration of Persia is one of the most hopeful results of the war, and if the only question to be considered was the immediate material advantages to be derived from an Eastern country by the British race, it might be possible to prove that Persia is of more value to us for the moment than Mesopotamia. There would be little hope of Persia, however, if Kurdistan remained unsubdued, and little prospect of roads or railways to the Mediterranean without some European control at Baghdad.

There is still another reason for assigning a high value to Mesopotamia, and that is its influential relationship to the Mohammedan world. This may prove to be of more vital importance to civilisation than all its other values, but it is a matter of special concern to the British Empire, in which there are more Moslems than Christians.

I have endeavoured elsewhere to trace the relationship of Mesopotamia to Mecca, but here I wish to draw attention to the influence of Islam upon our Western civilisation, illustrated by what all my readers could not fail to notice.

The Paris Conference was warned that the Turkish Empire must be dealt with quite differently from the other three enemy Powers, that all its decisions must in this case be affected by a religious influence, viz. the attitude of Islam. No such consideration was claimed for Austria; no one

suggested that its dismemberment might be grievous to the Pope or to the millions of Catholic Christians in Italy and Spain; yet, in spite of the wishes of the vast majority of the Sultan's subjects, we were informed that the Turkish Empire must not be tampered with, because of the religious sentiments of multitudes who never belonged to the Ottoman dominions. The Paris Conference was called upon to consider such important questions as the safety of Europe, the vindication of justice, the punishment of Turkey for its unspeakable crimes, and the protection of waterways and railway routes that are of vital interest to the commerce of the world; but all these questions must be left unsettled if the only feasible settlement should happen to clash with the wishes of some sections of Islam! Must the British race forget the treachery of the Turks, their alliance with the foes of freedom, their attempt to ruin us by fanning the flames of religious fanaticism in our Eastern provinces? Must we overlook the sufferings endured, the young lives sacrificed, scrap the millions we have lost, and run the risk of other perfidious alliances more terrible than those we have crushed? Yet this is the meaning of the claim that the Turkish Empire must not be brought before the bar of justice because of its religious relationship to the Mohammedan world. The decisions of the Paris Conference will illustrate the extent to which our European civilisation is affected by the religion of Islam.

There are, fortunately, many Mohammedans to-day who abhor the barbarism of the Turks, who refuse to mingle their religion with politics, who acknowledge the moral standards of civilised communities and are ready to recognise the rights of those whose religious convictions are contrary to their own. This more reasonable outlook will save civilised nations from the perils of religious fanaticism, but the chances of its survival will largely depend upon the influences that penetrate Arabia from the plains of Mesopotamia.

The British occupation of Irak has endowed the country with two additional values, which though transitory are remarkably interesting. We may turn to Mesopotamia for a striking illustration of what we mean by civilised methods in the conduct of war; here also we can behold the biggest experiment in State Socialism that has ever been made.

Our military commanders have been accused of extravagance because so much money has been spent on docks, railways, and irrigation schemes. It may be true that many mistakes were made, that much money was unwisely spent and some expensive schemes were subsequently abandoned; but all wars are characterised by wasteful extravagance, and this work in Mesopotamia was based upon military requirements. It was our way of carrying on a war; it has proved to be most successful, much cheaper and ever so much more humane than the methods adopted by Germany. We conquered a formidable enemy in a land of morasses

and floods, where there were no roads, no railways, and no transport facilities. We spent millions to construct what in other lands the Germans spent millions to destroy. We have also brought order out of chaos and subdued many hostile tribes by British methods of organisation rather than by intimidation. As a military expedient for keeping order amongst ignorant, turbulent tribes, an irrigation canal can claim to be far cheaper and much more useful than a punitive expedition. There are many religious fanatics in Mesopotamia, as the murder of Captain Marshall in Nejif so clearly proved; but the hatred naturally engendered through the heretical beliefs attributed to a victorious army has been largely dispelled by the material benefits brought by the conquerors to the districts they invaded. The Turks failed to rid the land of brigands largely because they neglected to provide their subjects with legitimate means of gaining a livelihood. Every Kurd carried a rifle instead of a bag of tools because he followed his father's trade and levied blackmail on every hapless traveller. He will shed less blood in the future by taking a few civilised hints from the Railway Executive!

The inhabitants of Mesopotamia have given us unmistakable proofs of their sincerity in welcoming us. The traders acclaimed us as a commercial race, powerful enough to secure order in the interests of trade, and able to open up new spheres of commercial expansion. The Sheikhs have welcomed

us because we have backed up their authority over their tribes and made them responsible for keeping order. The Fellah also welcomes us because we protect him against oppression and excessive taxation. We have enabled him to get a better livelihood than he ever had before. We have given him advice and assistance in irrigation and agriculture which has greatly increased his prosperity. Even the heads of religion have welcomed us. On the declaration of the Armistice a remarkable demonstration took place in the sacred city of Nejif. The spiritual leaders of the Shiah sects assembled with 70 Sayyids, 170 Sheikhs with 2000 mounted and 500 unmounted followers, to congratulate the British upon the defeat of Turkey. In September 1919 a great festival took place in Kerbela, attended by a record number of 200,000 pilgrims. In a public manifesto the religious leaders proclaimed their intense satisfaction with the British administration and the facilities it graciously accorded to the pilgrim traffic.

We have spent a lot of money upon Mesopotamia, but the Turks spent far more and did nothing. In view of their achievements, who will say that the military administrators were extravagant? In addition to their conquests there is the inestimable value of a contented population, augmenting the utility of extensive docks, railways, and canals that will materially benefit the British as well as the natives for many years to come.

It is greatly to be regretted that Labour leaders

in the British Isles have apparently overlooked Mesopotamia, where experiments have been carried out in almost every phase and feature of State colonisation and State control. There are volumes of valuable records available, and a wealth of new information worthy of the most careful consideration by a Labour conference, which might reveal a more practical path to an earthly paradise than that pursued by the Bolshevists of Petrograd. The completion of the work so well begun will now apparently be entrusted to private enterprise, for the Government was obliged to listen to the clamour for economy. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the companies formed for exploiting the vast resources of Mescpotamia will consider the claims of consumers as well as the dividends of shareholders.

There are many who believe the interests of the British public would be better served if the Empire Resources Development Commission could be permitted to control the major part of the agricultural, engineering, and mining operations that are necessary for the development of Mesopotamia. They claim that the kind of Government aid asked for by private companies has in the case of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, for example, evidently benefited the shareholders without yielding any corresponding advantage to the British consumer. If the Government had retained, for ten years, sole control of the agricultural and mining interests of Mesopotamia, it would have been

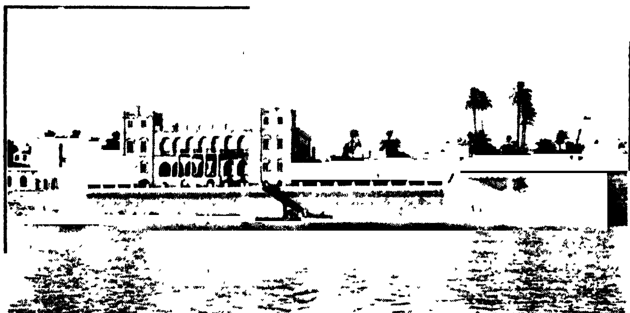
possible to relieve the British taxpayer by wiping off some of the heavy debts incurred through the Mesopotamian campaign, and in addition reduce the price of some of the necessaries of life exported from Basra to the British Isles.

In any case, whether it be by Government control or by private enterprise, the development of these vast resources will play no small part in solving some of the labour problems of Europe, besides providing a valuable object-lesson in the advantages and disadvantages of colonisation under State control.

It is obvious that Mesopotamia can only be gradually developed. No one would claim that it could possibly be otherwise. A suggestion was made in *The Near East*, not so fanciful as it may at first appear to be, that the pace of development will depend somewhat upon the progress made in designing tractors for use in agriculture. The writer urged that the area which men can cultivate is limited by the pace of the oxen which they drive, that if oxen can be replaced by tractors much more ground can be tilled, and irrigation schemes would become remunerative far more quickly than is possible under existing conditions.

We have elsewhere reviewed the value of the ancient monuments of Mesopotamia, but we would again emphasize the fact that, apart from its potential resources and in addition to its value as a centre of civilisation for the Mohammedan world, the prime importance of Mesopotamia lies

simply in its geographical position. It was this that gave Babylon its strategical and commercial importance, which made Baghdad also the capital of so great an Empire; and once more, with the development of overland communications, trunk railways, tunnels, canals, and inland waterways, the geographical bridge between the continents, so long broken down by Turkish tyranny, has become so important to the world's progress that it may justly be claimed to be one of the most important countries in the world.



The British Residency and Consulate General was one of the finest buildings in Baghdad. The Germans persuaded a native protégé to build a small house by the side of the Residency. The British Consul-General compelled the Turks to make him build a high wall on the roof to prevent him spying on behalf of the Germans.



In Basra and the Persian Gulf ports a weak disinfectant was squirted over the mail-bags to purify the contents from cholera and plague.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

I MADE my first acquaintance with Mesopotamia and the Turkish dominions in the autumn of 1894, when I joined the staff of the C.M.S. in the city of Baghdad. I thought I was destined to reside at an outpost of civilisation where my life would be quite uneventful, but I could hardly have chosen a warmer spot, in more senses than one, where men through the summer nights sleep on the roofs and live in cellars by day, the hotbed of Eastern plotters and Western intriguers, the rendezvous of pilgrims and fanatics from every corner of the earth. I became acquainted with many Indian Nawabs who live in Baghdad and in the sacred city of Kerbela as pensioners of the Indian Government; with renegade Afghan princes who had fallen into disfavour with the reigning Emir; with restless Young Turks banished from Constantinople by the tyranny of Abdul Hamid; with the leaders of the great Babi sect expelled from Persia, and afterwards removed to Acre; with other more worthy notables, such as Prince Firman

Firma, who was then living in exile, and subsequently became Prime Minister of Persia. These Eastern phases of Baghdad life were fascinating enough, but, as the only European clergyman in Mesopotamia, I was brought into touch with features of Western politics which were of thrilling interest and of world-wide importance. In addition to my regular duties, I became honorary chaplain to the German Consulate, where I married certain German couples, baptized German infants, and was consequently invited to the dinners, feasts, and festivities that took place amongst the rapidly increasing Prussian community in the city of Baghdad. It was nearly twenty-five years ago that I first heard of Germany's *Drang nach Osten* and began to take an interest in the hopes, the aims and ambitions of the greatest military Power in Europe. From the lips of my German friends I learned that Baghdad would become the centre of a great Asiatic extension of the German Empire, an advanced base for world-wide dominion. I heard a great deal more about these Eastern ambitions whilst residing for three years in Jerusalem, where German influence was particularly well marked. During a seven years' residence in Syria I had occasion to travel frequently into Asia Minor, along the line of the Baghdad Railway, where I could not fail to notice how completely the whole of that region was rapidly falling under the control of the German concessionaires.

A few months before the war broke out, a

European official came into my Seamen's Institute at Beyrout to play a game of billiards, and, in the course of conversation, informed me that he had just arrived from Constantinople, "which," he said, "is entirely in the hands of the Germans. The Sultan dare not go to the Selamlik, or interview any foreigner, without permission of the German Embassy." The growth of German influence in the Turkish Empire was remarkably rapid, and was unfortunately utilised to perpetuate the worst features of Turkish misrule, with the evident intention of posing as the best friends of the Turks and thus thwarting the economic or political ambitions of every other European Power. If Russia was, to some extent, responsible for the plight of Armenia, Germany was unquestionably to blame for the awful condition of Macedonia. She believed a reformed Turkey would spoil her prospects of control at Constantinople and imperil her plans for a Pan-German road from Berlin to Baghdad, so she did her utmost to foster the corruptions of the old Turkish régime, and hampered every attempt that was made to establish peace and good government in the Balkan provinces.

After the outbreak of war, Germany made no secret of her war aims in the East. Serbia must disappear, and the other Balkan States must lose their independence, in order that Germany might forge a permanent "political, economic, and military link between Hungary and the Turkish Empire—between Constantinople, Berlin, and Vienna." It

is necessary to remember that the war did not begin with Belgium, but with Serbia, clearly because, at the conclusion of the Balkan wars, Serbia became the barrier across the path of Germany's long-contemplated expansion to the Eastern Mediterranean and the Persian Gulf. This fact became more and more evident with the progress of the war, and many German writers acknowledged that these Eastern aspirations were the real causes of the war.

In the *Kreuz Zeitung* Herr Otto Hotzsch wrote: "Germany's Turkish policy—the Berlin–Baghdad idea—was the one pillar of her world-policy and the one great occasion of conflict with Great Britain." In July 1918 the *Rheinisch Westfälische Zeitung* declared that, "should the British permanently retain Mesopotamia, there would be no possibility of *German predominance in Asia Minor.* Everything must be done to free Egypt from the claws of the British lion and to place the Suez Canal, as in old times, under Ottoman authority, and consequently *under that of the Central Powers.*" Again, on 5th October 1919 the following words appeared in Capt. Von Salzmann's military article in the *Vossische Zeitung*: "Had we succeeded in cutting in two the British world-empire by the occupation of Egypt and the Suez Canal, by completely safeguarding the Persian Gulf–Afghanistan line, the war would have been decided in our favour."

These extracts suffice to illustrate the avowed intentions of Germany in the Near East. Her plans not only constituted a menace to British

hegemony in India, but were evidently deliberately aimed at the ruin of the British Empire. A well-known French publicist expressed his conviction in the *Figaro* that, "If the Germans enter Constantinople and open their great road from the mouth of the Elbe to the mouth of the Euphrates and Tigris, the whole fabric of British Imperialism is concerned. The whole magnificent edifice of the British Empire will be shaken to its foundations."

Prince Lichnowsky confessed in his *Revelations* that Great Britain yielded again and again to the ever-growing demands of Germany's schemes in Mesopotamia, though many of our leading statesmen protested that these concessions would imperil the safety of the British Empire. Whilst we were making every possible attempt to appease Germany, her representatives were actively intriguing to undermine British prestige in the East and to oust the last semblance of British influence from Afghanistan, Persia, and the Persian Gulf.

In addition to this deliberate bid for military supremacy and political power, it was also evident that Germany aimed at a monopoly of the world's trade. In November 1917 President Wilson criticised Germany's appeal for peace and asserted that, whilst Germany referred to Belgium and Alsace-Lorraine, she persistently declined to make any suggestion about what was, after all, the heart of the whole matter. She contended that all questions concerning the Balkan States and the old Turkish Empire were matters of her domestic

concern. The President declared "that lying behind the thoughts of the German Government, in its dreams of the future, was the determination to dominate the labour and industry of the world. The Germans were not content with success by superior achievement; they wanted success by authority. The Berlin to Baghdad Railway was constructed in order to bring a threat of force down the flank of the industrial undertakings of half a dozen other countries, so that, when German competition came in, it would not be resisted too far—because there was always the possibility of getting German armies into the heart of that country quicker than other armies could be got there. From Hamburg to Baghdad a bulk of German power would be inserted into the heart of the world. If she could keep that, she would keep all that her armies contemplated when the war began, and her power to disturb the world would last as long as she kept it."

The control of Turkish finance and the Ottoman railways by the Berlin Bank was of a nature that threatened to throttle completely any but German trade. The merchants in Turkey were able to offer three years' credit to their customers, for the Berlin Government supported the claims of her bankers, who attracted depositors by the offer of 4 per cent. interest upon current accounts.

Twelve months before the outbreak of war I paid a visit to the mountains of the Hauran south of Damascus. I had conversations with all the

leading chiefs of 50,000 Druzes whom the Turks attempted—at the instigation of Germany—to deprive of their time-honoured privileges. They were thought to be too friendly to England and too dangerously near the Hedjaz Railway; so they had to be crushed. A large army under Sami Pasha was brought against them, but after many months of guerilla warfare he failed to subdue these mountain warriors; so he resorted to more "kultured" methods, in accordance with his German training. He invited the chiefs to a conference and promised them safe conduct. They were all arrested as soon as they arrived at the General's tent, for "necessity knows no law," as the German Chancellor said, and "scraps of paper can easily be torn up." The leading Druze chief was executed in Damascus, and his brother only saved his life by sending a messenger to the villages to fetch his old mother, who quickly collected three thousand five hundred pounds in gold as a bribe to the General. The chief was then banished to Rhodes, and when the island was taken by the Italians he was released and with difficulty reached Cairo. Lord Kitchener intervened with the Turks on his behalf, and he was eventually permitted to return to the Hauran, where I saw him on the occasion of my visit. He showed me, amongst other things, his new steam flour-mill, and told me to observe that all the machinery was made in Germany. He whispered a few words in my ear which led me to make further inquiries elsewhere. I learned that English merchants had introduced

twenty or thirty oil engines amongst the Hauran Druzes; but Germany came along to assist her ally the Turk, and a Prussian engineer prowled around these mountain villages of the Hauran, ostensibly to undertake necessary repairs, with the result that the English engines were soon displaced by those of German manufacture. Backed by the German Government through its consuls and its banks, the engineers of Haifa were able to introduce more than five hundred engines into the Hauran, where, under ordinary circumstances of legitimate trade, we could easily have secured an excellent market for the merchandise of Great Britain.

The imposition of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty upon prostrate Russia clearly brought to light another feature of Germany's war aims. She desired to monopolise the food-supplies of that great country for her own manufacturing areas, so that her manufactured goods would in return be forced upon the Russian merchants. The anticipated German control of Constantinople and the Dardanelles likewise aimed at the economic ruin of Russia or her submission to German demands.

Another great scheme of navigable inland waterways was frequently referred to by eminent German writers. By deepening her canals and joining up the great rivers of Europe she would be able to send ships of 1500 tons burden through the continent from the North Sea to the mouth of the Danube. The scheme was expounded at the Central Europe

Congress at Munich by Professor Oelwein, who sketched the ideal canal system as follows :—

1. The Central Canal connecting all the navigable streams, from the Rhine to the Vistula, which flow into the North Sea and the Baltic.
2. Navigable connection of the North Sea and Baltic ports with the Danube and the Black Sea by way of the Danube–Oder Canal.
3. Navigable connection of the Rhine with the Danube and the Black Sea by the canalisation of the Main and the construction of a new Ludwig Canal.

   These canals would form the main arteries from west to east and from north to south-east. The subsidiary waterways would be as follows :—
4. The Rhine connected with the Dortmund–Ems Canal in the north, and, after canalisation of the way from Basel to Schaffhausen, connection with Lake Constance in the south.
5. Continuation of the Weser to the Main and to the Danube and to Munich.
6. The Elbe, connected with the ways that are already being canalised, to Prague.
7. The Oder.
8. The Vistula, connected with the continuation of the Danube–Oder Canal to Cracow.
9. Continuation of the Danube–Oder–Vistula Canal to the Dneister.

10. Canalisation of the Save, connected on the one hand with the Danube by a canal from Bukovar to Samatz, and on the other hand with Fiume and the Adriatic.
11. A waterway from Semendria on the Danube through the valleys of the Morava and the Vardar to Salonika.

These inland waterways were to be supplemented by some remarkable canals through the Manytch Depression from the Don to the Volga. As the Caspian Sea is 85 feet below the level of the Black Sea, it was pointed out that by means of these canals a considerable portion of the low-lying districts of South Russia would be flooded by raising the level of the Caspian Sea, and thus create a navigable waterway from the Black Sea to the Far East. It was furthermore declared that the whole of German interests in Europe and Asia could be adequately protected by an enormous establishment of German Zeppelins and airships upon the Gobi plateau. Many of these vast schemes appear somewhat visionary and impracticable, but these are times of great engineering achievements, and it is impossible to deny that further advances in scientific knowledge will alter the aspect of many great problems within the next fifty years. It is clear, however, that Germany ignored the claims of other nations, for her plans were outlined upon the assumption that the whole world must lie at her feet.

To understand the significance of her intentions,

it is necessary to glance at a few geographical and historical facts. If we regard Asia Minor as belonging more to Europe than to Asia, we shall observe a triangular stretch of land lying in the heart of the Eastern Hemisphere and forming a junction for the three continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa. Mesopotamia is on one side of the triangle, Syria and Palestine on the other, Aleppo lies at the apex, while a line drawn from Gaza to Basra forms its base. These little lands have played a most important part in the world's history. Besides being the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of peoples, nations, languages, and religions, they have contained for millenniums the capital cities of great world-empires. For many centuries also the greatest of the world's highways passed through this important area. The geographical importance of Mesopotamia and its ancient capitals is well described by the late Dr King in the following words:—

"Babylon's geographical position endowed her with a strategical and commercial importance which enabled her to survive the rudest shocks to her material prosperity. A glance at the map will show that the city lay in the north of Babylonia, just below the confluence of the two great rivers in their lower course. Built originally on the left bank of the Euphrates, she was protected by its stream from any sudden incursion of the desert tribes. At the same time she was in immediate contact with the broad expanse of alluvial plain to

the south-west, intersected with its network of canals. But the real strength of her position lay in her near neighbourhood to the transcontinental routes of traffic. When approaching Baghdad from the north, the Mesopotamian plain contracts to a width of some thirty miles, and although it has already begun to expand again in the latitude of Babylon, that city was well within touch of both rivers. She consequently lay at the meeting-point of two great avenues of commerce. The Euphrates route linked Babylonia with Northern Syria and the Mediterranean, and was her natural line of contact with Egypt; it also connected her with Cappadocia, by way of the Cilician Gates through the Taurus along the track of the later Royal Road. Herodotus describes the Royal Road of the Persian period as passing from Ephesus by the Cilician Gates to Susa, and it obtained its name from the fact that all government business of the Persian Court passed along it. The distances, given by Herodotus in parasangs and stades, may well be derived from some official Persian document; but it followed the track of a still earlier Royal Road, by which Khatti, the capital of the old Hittite Empire, maintained its communications westward and with the Euphrates valley. Farther north, the trunk route through Anatolia from the west, reinforced by tributary routes from the Black Sea, turns at Sivas, on the Upper Halys, and, after crossing the Euphrates in the mountains, first strikes the Tigris at Diarbekir; then, leaving the river for the

easier plain, it rejoins the stream in the neighbourhood of Nineveh, and so advances southward to Susa or to Babylon. A third great route that Babylon controlled was that to the west through the Gates of Zagros, the easiest point of penetration to the Iranian plateau and the natural outlet of commerce from Northern Elam. At the present day this forms the great trunk road across the highlands of Persia, by way of Kermanshah; and since the Moslem conquest it has been the chief overland route from the farther East for all those making the pilgrimage to Mecca. Babylon thus lay across the stream of the nations' traffic, and in the direct path of any invader advancing upon the southern plains." [1]

I venture to add another quotation from a more recent book by Mr Evans Lewin, who says: "Mesopotamia itself, the country between the rivers, forms one of the most remarkable regions of the world. Stretching between the two mighty waterways of the Tigris and Euphrates and spreading from the foothills of the Armenian mountains to Baghdad, and thence by extension to the head of the Persian Gulf, it forms a natural avenue between the East and the West, a strategic highway of supreme importance, narrowing to a comparatively small outlet into Persian waters, and an economic road over which were carried the riches of Asia to be exchanged for the products of Europe. Held successively by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians,

[1] *History of Babylon*, p. 4.

Greeks, Romans, Arabs, and Turks; the home of many of the mighty cities of antiquity, such as Babylon, Nineveh, Asshur, Edessa, Hît, Ctesiphon, and Thapsacus; crowded with the wonderful ruins of buried civilisations, and holding in its alluvial lands the secrets of primitive ages—it presents a standing evidence of the frailty of all things and of the permanence of change and decay. Mighty emperors have held sway over its destinies; warriors have crossed its torrid and sweltering lands on their journeys of conquest. Here were the palaces of Sennacherib and Asshurbanipal, of Nebuchadnezzar and Tiglath-Pileser. Here marched Alexander on his way to the conquest of India; Trajan, Julian, Saladin, and the romantic Haroun 'l Raschid, who made Baghdad the centre of all the wit, learning, and art of the Moslem world; and to these regions have turned the thoughts of conquerors and warriors in all ages of the world. It is obvious that a country which has played so important a part in history—from whose bosom have sprung many of the civilising agencies of the past; which has attracted the adventurous from all parts of the known globe—must possess qualities and resources of an uncommon order. In addition to its extraordinary fertility, it was the highway of antiquity and the clearing-house of commerce. Germans, with their keen eye to commercial advantages and with their appreciation of strategic values, have recognised, in spite of new strategical and commercial developments, the possibility of

re-erecting the ancient empires of the East and of re-opening a great commercial and therefore strategical route from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf, and incidentally of attacking Great Britain in two of her most vulnerable points—Egypt and India."[1] The monarchs of Persia brought formidable armies from Mesopotamia along these ancient highways to Egypt and to Europe. Alexander the Great ultimately drove back the Persians at the battle of Issos, and routed them near the plains of Arbela. On his return from India he chose the banks of the Euphrates for the capital city of his contemplated world-empire, but he died at Babylon before his plans were complete.

There is another great road that was immensely important for many generations. It became known as the "Silk Street" route, from the fact that the silks from China were brought by caravans along this road in almost a straight line to the shores of the Mediterranean. The route was recently surveyed by Sir Aurel Stein on the initiative of the Government of India. He took two and a half years to complete his survey, and reported many interesting things that clearly indicated the popularity of this famous road for many centuries. The greater part of the road has also been surveyed by modern engineers with a view to railway construction. Wherefore we may assume that in due time there will be a trunk railway running from Pekin through Central Asia, and thence either

[1] *The German Road to the East*, p. 33.

through Persia to Baghdad or more directly to Aleppo, where it will meet the great Baghdad Railway. On the 3rd of April 1916 a lecture was delivered in Berlin by a member of the Prussian Parliament before the members of the German-Chinese Union, in which the lecturer claimed that "the German world-empire could only be established on the basis of overland dominion extending from the North Sea to China by way of Turkey and Persia. A British blockade could be rendered absolutely ineffective if Germany controlled the ancient "Silk Street" highway. China and Persia could provide the legions for the war of 1927 with all the food, petrol, copper, and cotton required to establish the Teuton as master of Europe and Asia."

In the days of Queen Elizabeth, when the British began to lay the foundations of their present commercial prosperity, there was established in Aleppo the headquarters of the famous Levant Company. The silks from China and the treasures from India which found their way to Aleppo, were sent off by British merchants from Alexandretta to the British Isles. There were then so many pirates in the Mediterranean Sea that it became necessary to organise, for the protection of merchantmen, what then became known as the British Royal Navy.

Ever since the Turks came into possession of these Eastern highways, they have been practically useless and unsafe for all ordinary travellers, so that the important junction between the continents has been blocked for centuries.

The insecurity that prevailed at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea led to the discovery of America when Columbus and others set out to find a safer route round to the East Indies, and consequently discovered the Western Continent. It was in those days that the Mediterranean merchants controlled the major part of sea-borne traffic, and the most important ports of the world were Venice, Genoa, and Amalfi. In 1497 Vasco da Gama discovered the Cape route to India, with the result that the flourishing ports of the Mediterranean Sea were practically ruined by a change of front in the world's activities. With the opening of the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean became once more the most important route from West to East, but the immense changes which have taken place during the last thirty years all tend to accentuate the growing importance of the ancient overland routes of the world.

The Swiss mountain ranges have now been tunnelled in a remarkable way, powerful locomotives have come into use, international sleeping-cars and refreshment-cars are available for overland travellers on transcontinental railways, so that before the war it was possible to go with ease and comfort from London to Constantinople in three and a half days. Motor traffic is being further developed, electric power for railways is being brought into more frequent use, inland waterways can now be utilised for cheap transport in a way that was impossible half a century ago. Many

schemes are being brought forward by prominent engineers for a great ship canal from Antwerp to Marseilles; for a branch waterway from the Danube to Salonika; for another great canal, 969 miles long, from the mouth of the Orontes to the head of the Persian Gulf. In addition to motor roads, inland waterways, and the great railway routes, the world is now face to face with a new aerial navigation that will necessitate the organisation of recognised overland routes and the establishment of aerodromes which may become as important to the traffic of the future as the rocky harbours and storm-protected ports have been to the sea-borne traffic of the past.

Never before have the nations of the world been compelled to recognise, as they do to-day, their absolute dependence upon one another for very existence. Problems of finance, labour, and food supplies are all international. The great manufacturing areas of the West cannot exist without adequate supplies of raw material from Asia and Africa, and multitudes of Easterns have perished from the lack of supplies from the West. It is a matter of prime importance to the world that all the essential lines of communication should be most carefully guarded and constantly kept open. It is hardly less important that the vast neglected areas of Asia and Africa should be properly developed in order to safeguard humanity from famines, wars, or social revolution. It is furthermore impossible for the Western peoples to hope

for a higher standard of living without the greater production of which these Eastern lands are capable, and the possibility of more rapid communication between East and West.

All these considerations have brought the little lands that join the three continents into far greater prominence than ever they were before. The nations of the world will perish by social upheavals, tumults, famine, and war if Turkey is permitted any longer to hold the bridge and block the way. The statesmen of Europe saw this; Germany saw it, and tried to place her mailed fist upon the key to the whole world's future. The military correspondent of the *Times* was not far wrong when he suggested that this war might become known as "The War of the Turkish Succession." Prussia's military adventures had always proved to be so profitable that she deemed herself justified in preparing for world-wide conquest. The Baghdad Railway scheme was the most important instrument that she would utilise for this end, and by capturing the control of the Turkish Empire she would obtain command of the Dardanelles, the Euphrates valley, and the Suez Canal. It is also well known that she intended to drive a great German wedge across the heart of Africa, for the British in East Africa discovered that German maps were placed in the hands of native schoolmasters to teach the children how much of Africa would come under German control with the expulsion of the British at the conclusion of the war. So many concessions

had been made to Germany's persistent demands in the Near East that her contemplated world-empire began to assume a definite shape. The *Mittel Europa* scheme would give her control of one continent, the Baghdad Railway with the hegemony of the Ottoman dominions would give her control of another, and the restoration of Egypt to the Ottoman Empire would bring the third continent under her control. Australia then would become her prey, and the greatest world-empire ever conceived would be at the feet of the Kaiser, who, of course, would champion the cause of the Teutons in the Western Hemisphere. There is now no question that Germany faced eastward when she began the war, and that Mesopotamia was her real front. With the defeat of Germany, the world can only reap the fruits of victory when adequate safeguards have been secured in the East for the great overland routes from Paris to Pekin, from London to Australia, from Petrograd to the Cape.



A picturesque corner of one of the creeks in Basra, often called "The Venice of the East."

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF THE BAGHDAD RAILWAY

When Germany defeated France in 1870 she not only deprived her neighbour on the western border of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, but she reorganised the Central States of Europe into a great unified German Empire, and at once began to push forward a large number of railway schemes eastward through the Balkan States towards Constantinople. For this purpose she was able to utilise the enormous indemnity which she had wrested from France, so that in less than twenty years a great new trunk line was completed through Eastern Europe, and in 1888 the first train of the Orient Express steamed into Constantinople. This necessitated a new defensive and economic outlook for all the countries of Europe.

For many years Great Britain had sought for opportunities to develop a short route from Europe to India. In 1837 large sums of money were spent upon the survey of the Euphrates valley. A concession for a railway from Alexandretta to the Persian Gulf was obtained from Turkey in 1851.

For various reasons, more or less connected with the knotty Near Eastern problems, this Euphrates valley scheme was unfortunately given up. In 1876, when we purchased four million pounds worth of shares in the Suez Canal, we apparently believed we had secured something better than a railway line through the Euphrates valley. It looked as though the interests of the British Empire were adequately safeguarded by the substantial control we thus acquired over the newest and shortest route to India and the East. A few years afterwards, however, it became evident that another road was about to be developed by Germany through Constantinople and the Euphrates valley, for an important little railway from Scutari to Ismid passed from British ownership into German hands.

This line, which may well be called the first section of the Baghdad Railway, was originally constructed by the Turkish Government, but under Turkish control it was a complete financial failure. It runs through a very delightful piece of country, where many of the wealthy Turkish officials and merchants have their private residences. They go by rail and ferry to Constantinople every day, just as the London city man lives in the suburbs and goes daily to London by train. Under the corrupt system of government that prevailed in Turkey, only the poor and those without influence were expected to pay their fares; the pashas and their relatives rode to and fro free of charge; they

transported their possessions, their merchandise, and the goods of their supporters, gratis. The pashas received bribes for the privileges they secured to their friends, so they practically pocketed all the proceeds, while the railway administration went bankrupt.

The Government now tried to sell the line to a British company, but the German and the French ambassadors protested that its sale to the British would be regarded as an unfriendly act. An agreement was eventually arrived at whereby the line was leased to a British company for twenty-five years, and the lessees were to have preferential rights for extending the line to Angora and eventually to Baghdad. Thus the great Baghdad Railway scheme was originally a British concern, and I have shown that it was also a British conception, for the Euphrates valley route was surveyed by the British in 1837, in 1851 we held concessions for a railway, and now once more in 1878 a British company leased a railway with concessions that provided for its extension to the city of Baghdad. By the end of three years the new directors had converted a deficit of £40,000 per annum into a profit of £24,000.

When the Ismid line passed into the hands of a British company, two of the directors were unfortunately Germans, who persistently endeavoured to bring the railway under German control. They succeeded in compelling the British representatives to retire; then the line reverted to the Government,

and was subsequently handed over by the Turks to the Deutsche Bank.

Under British control, all the materials, the machinery, and most of the staff came from England; but after 1881 everything came from Germany. The Germans now obtained further concessions with additional guarantees from the Turks, and launched a new company upon the London financial market. Strange to say, the British company had failed to interest English financiers in the British Baghdad Railway scheme, but the new company under the auspices of the German Bank succeeded in raising from London £1,000,000 in 5 per cent. bonds.

In less than five years from the acquisition of the Scutari-Ismid Railway the Germans had completed a line to Angora, and two important new concessions gave Germany the right to extend the line north-east to Ḳaiseriyeh, Sivas, Diarbekir, and Baghdad, also south-east to Eski-Shehr and Konia. On account of representations made by Russia, the former route was given up, though after the outbreak of war a certain portion of it was constructed, chiefly with the aid of British prisoners who were taken by the Turks at Kut 'l Amara. The line to the south, however, was pushed forward, and 269 miles were completed by 1896.

Some very interesting postcards were sent to me by the brother of a British officer who was one of the prisoners working on the line at Angora.

They contained a few important messages which revealed some of the ingenuity displayed in eluding the Turkish censor. One of them ran thus :—

"We have arrived here safely, and perhaps we shall go on to Constantinople, but write to me UPON THE RAILWAY. If possible, send me some books like Matt. x. 27. My love to all."

There was as much information on the front as on the back, for we noticed that the card was wrongly addressed, though it reached its destination safely, as the brother was a well-known man. Instead of Haddon House there was "Haddon Lamv," and instead of 31 Brunswick Road there was 4–9 Brunswick Road. Now the card came from Angora and contained a strange reference to the railway; Matt. x. 27 says, "What I tell you in the darkness, that speak ye in the light"; and Lamentations v. 4–9, disguised in the address, says, "We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us; our pursuers are upon our necks; we are weary, and have no rest. We get our bread with the peril of our lives." In this way the Foreign Office was informed of the fact that the railway was apparently being extended from Angora, and that British prisoners of war were being compelled to construct it under very trying conditions. The second postcard ran as follows :—

"(NAME)
217 Haddon Hym,
3 Brunswick Verse,
(TOWN), ANGLETERRE.

"All well. Thanks for taking so much trouble about books. No signs of them yet, but less urgent now, though useful for others less favourably placed. Hope Bella is doing as well as Bruno. What is her latest address?"

In this postcard the writer thanks his brother for referring to the Foreign Office, and indicates his removal from Angora, though others were still working on the line. "Bella" refers to the war in general, and "Bruno" refers to the Russian bear, who was then approaching Erzeroom. The third verse of the hymn suggested by the address inquires as to the probable termination of the war. This young officer, who kept up an ingenious correspondence, was one of the party that made the remarkable dash of 450 miles to freedom.

Angora is famous for its breed of sheep and goats that produce a peculiarly valuable wool. Some of these goats were introduced into South Africa some years ago, and a better quality of Angora wool has been obtained from the Cape than that which came from Asia Minor.

Eski-Shehr is situated about 2000 feet above sea-level, and after the advent of the railway it became a flourishing town and the chief depot

for the German Anatolian lines. Large quantities of wheat and fullers' earth were annually exported from this district, and it is especially famous for its excellent meerschaum mines. The Turks derived a revenue of £8000 a year from the royalties and taxes on the mines, which, according to an item in the railway concessions, were now to be better managed and exploited by the Germans.

From Eski-Shehr the line proceeds for 100 miles to Afiun-Kara-Hissar, where it connects with another line from Smyrna, which also originally belonged to a British company, and passed under French control in 1893. The Turks made use of this Smyrna railway and the branch line from Magnesia to Panderma for the purpose of bringing reinforcements to the Dardanelles at a time when our submarines worried the shipping in the Sea of Marmora.

The next important stopping-place on the main line, 169 miles south of Afiun, is Konia, a city of about 30,000 inhabitants, where there are many interesting remains of the Biblical Iconium, in what was once the Roman province of Lycaonia. The Turks took a special pride in Konia, with its highly respectable industry in gloves and stockings. They said it was the first place visited by Noah when he came out of the ark, for its altitude is 3320 feet; and they did not hesitate to tell you that he came there to purchase a new pair of gloves and some stockings. The headquarters of the Dancing Dervishes, with the gorgeous tomb

of their founder, are at Konia. The religious chief of this sect, known as the Chelebi Effendi, is the man who girds every new Sultan with the sword of Osman on his accession to the Sultanate. Not many years ago an over-zealous Turkish official confiscated a case of New Testaments and imprisoned the Armenian colporteurs because he scented a revolutionary plot in the highly suspicious Epistle to the Galatians. The unfortunate Armenians were told they would be detained in prison until they divulged the whereabouts of the revolutionary writer of the Epistle, named Paul.

The original Anatolian Railway terminates at Konia, where now also the Baghdad Railway proper begins. Though technically distinct, they practically became one enterprise, in which the Deutsche Bank invested £16,000,000 sterling.

After leaving Konia, the railway runs through a large arid plain for 25 miles to Chumra station, where the Germans successfully began to irrigate over 130,000 acres of the Konia plain by the water brought from the lakes of the district. Some of the extensive wheat-fields supplied even Berlin with corn during the progress of the war. The line, after running through a deserted plain that ought to become populous and fertile under a decent government, reaches the most difficult portion of all, and runs through the Taurus Mountains near the famous Cilician Gates to Adana.

The two tunnel sections through the Taurus and the Amanus Mountains are extremely interest-

ing, and exhibit remarkable engineering skill. The preliminary survey of this portion of the line presented special difficulties on account of the precipitous nature of the mountains. A special theodolite was invented for photographing the mountain passes, and the tunnels were planned from maps made from photographs. There are four tunnels through the Taurus and fourteen through the Amanus Mountains, the former with a total length of 11 miles and the latter with a total length of about 5 miles. The Baghche tunnel through the Amanus range is 5300 yards, the longest tunnel in Turkey. It rises 245 feet from the level of the western entrance, and descends only 45 feet to its eastern exit. It was very badly ventilated, and when the engines were using briquettes for fuel the passengers endured for nearly half an hour one of the worst imaginable discomforts of railway travelling. These tunnels were only completed a few weeks before the signing of the Armistice, and, though not properly lined with masonry, they are cut through such hard rock that they appeared to be perfectly safe. Numbers of workmen were engaged upon the tunnels under the direction of our Royal Engineers when I passed through in the summer of 1919.

Bozanti is one of the highest points in the Taurus range, where the mountain scenery is magnificent. All the lower hills are covered with thick forests, water power is plentiful, and many valuable mines are said to exist in the vicinity. There is

enough wood and coal in the Taurus to supply the needs of Egypt and the Levant. The plains of Cilicia could easily be irrigated, and much greater quantities of cotton could be grown in the Adana plains, where some ill-equipped factories have already done remarkably well.

Thousands of British prisoners of war laboured to complete this vitally important section of the Baghdad Railway, and the well-filled cemeteries tell their tale of the numbers who perished under the lash of their Turkish taskmasters. At Belemadik, near Bozanti, I was told of a Turkish officer who had a cinema erected, compelled all the railway employees as well as the prisoners to witness the frequent display of German propaganda films, and deducted the price of the tickets from their allowances or pay. At the conclusion of the war he retired with his fortune to Constantinople, where he posed as a friend and brother to the Allied prisoners of war.

There are not many places in Europe that combine so great a variety of natural beauty with a wealth of mineral and agricultural resources as the country through which the railway passes from Konia to Aleppo. The enormous quantities of German war material captured by the British all along the line from the Baghche tunnel to Bozanti, the large Turkish buildings at Islahiyeh, the quantities of military encampments and the miles upon miles of Decauville lines running hither and thither amongst the mountains, indicated the immense importance

to the Central Powers of these strategic strongholds during the progress of the great World War. With the aid of the Baghdad Railway and its tributaries through Palestine, the largest army in the world could here be safely sheltered and equipped for a speedy descent upon Egypt or the plains of Mesopotamia. If only Germany had managed to escape from the toils that held her armies in the West, Cilicia might have become her principal base of operations for expansion in the East.

There is a useful little railway from Adana to Mersine, and three branches, completed or projected, between Adana and Aleppo — one from Toprak-Kalah to Alexandretta, another to Marash, and a third to Aintab. The main line enters Aleppo and connects with the French lines through Syria, but the junction for the Baghdad line is at Muslimiyeh; thence it proceeds to Jerablus, where the Euphrates is spanned by a magnificent bridge, and so on to Ras 'l Ain, Nisibin, and Mosul. Many fine bridges and costly viaducts have been constructed in different parts of the line, and the piers of some of them exceed 100 feet in height.

A northern extension of the railway has been surveyed from a point near Jerablus to Birijik, Urfa, Diarbekir, and Erzeroom, where it will some day be connected with the existing lines that run through Tiflis in the Caucasus. Another branch has been planned to run from Ras 'l Ain to Mardin, Diarbekir, and thence on to Sivas and Angora.

Besides the commercial advantages of the northern connections, they would be immensely serviceable in securing a peaceful settlement of the Armenian vilayets.

In order to speed up the construction of this strategic railway and establish through communication between Berlin and Baghdad, the Germans brought large quantities of railway material to Basra and completed a line of 70 miles from Baghdad to Samarra before the outbreak of war. Though the most important part of Baghdad lies on the eastern bank of the Tigris, the Germans built their railway station and other large buildings on its western outskirts. The first sod was cut at Baghdad with becoming pomp and ceremony, in the presence of every available German and Turkish official and a large assembly of Arabs. A silver trowel with an ebony handle was produced, but, unfortunately for the Germans, the handle broke, and thereby the Arabs discerned an evil omen, while the Europeans present observed that the handle was evidently made of deal cleverly "ebonised" by the makers in Germany.

The completion of the Mesopotamian section of the Baghdad Railway rests with the British, who have considerably modified the original plans. The Germans intended to bring the railway down the right bank of the Tigris from Mosul to Samarra, but it seems probable that the main line will now proceed from Mosul to Baghdad through the more populous districts to the east of the Tigris.

Over a thousand miles of railway were constructed by the British Army in Mesopotamia between the occupation of Basra and the conclusion of peace with Turkey. Some of it has been taken up, and some which was laid down for purely military purposes will be altered and relaid with a different gauge. At the end of 1919 there were 945 miles of railway being constantly used in Mesopotamia.

A beginning was made with a line from Basra to Nasiriyeh, on the Euphrates. Another line ran from Kurna to Amara, and a metre-gauge line was completed by August 1917 from Kût to Baghdad. While the journey of 108 miles by rail was accomplished in twelve hours, the river journey of 200 miles between Baghdad and Kût could not be done in less than two days.

Another metre-gauge line was sent out eastward to Bakuba, and thence to Kuretu, near Kasr-i-Shirin, on the Persian frontier. A standard-gauge line of 48 miles was made to Felujah and Dibban, on the Euphrates, while another standard-gauge line was completed in May 1918 to Hillah and Babylon. This was extended southward to join up with the line from Basra to Nasiriyeh. The first through train left Basra at midnight, 13th January 1920, and arrived at Baghdad South Station on the afternoon of 15th January. The German line from Baghdad to Samarra has also been extended northwards beyond Tikrit on the way to Mosul, and direct-

being made between Kût and Basra. Practically the whole of the material used for this network of lines in Mesopotamia, and almost all the personnel engaged in its construction, came from India.

In addition to the railways, the British military engineers constructed hundreds of miles of motor roads to all the important places that could not be reached by a railway line. From the railhead at Kuretu, on the Persian frontier, there is a particularly good motor road, constructed by the Royal Engineers, which runs over the Pai-Tak Pass to Kermanshah and Hamadan. There is no doubt that the railway line from Baghdad will soon be extended to Hamadan and the Persian capital, whence it will proceed towards Seistan, and be joined to the new line which has recently been constructed to Seistan from the Indian frontier.

There is only one tram-line in Mesopotamia, that runs for three miles from Baghdad, on the west of the Tigris, to the sacred city of Kasmain. It is a relic of the past, assigned by reliable authorities to the Ottoman period, though it might be easily mistaken for a prehistoric antiquity. The primitive chariot with its shapeless steeds is doomed to disappear, though it has been a boon to multitudes of weary pilgrims who had to traverse this sultry stage of an earthly pilgrimage with their goats, hens, and other live stock *ad infinitum*. There will always be plenty of passengers for the electric cars or motor omnibuses that may henceforth be run as adjuncts to the Mesopotamian railroads.

Two interesting official statements recently issued at Baghdad illustrate the rapidity with which advantage is taken by merchants and pilgrims of the newly constructed roads and railways.

The line to Hillah was completed in May 1918, and in six months over 60,000 tons of wheat and barley were brought from Babylon to Baghdad, and in the same time the pilgrim traffic to the Kerbela shrines doubled all previous Turkish records.

The second statement referred to the resumption of traffic through Kurdistan, the most turbulent part of the Turkish Empire. Brigandage had become so rife around Suleimaniyeh that for many years before the war the roads were impassable. Many critics too hastily declared that the Kurds were an insoluble problem to the British Army; but, far more speedily than the greatest optimists could have anticipated, a motor road was made, brigandage was suppressed, a revolt was quelled, and pilgrims from Northern Persia began to pass safely through Southern Kurdistan.

The utility and value of the Baghdad Railway were considerably enhanced by the completion, in quite recent years, of a number of lines through Palestine and Syria. In the summer of 1919 I was able to travel all the way by train from Cairo to Constantinople, visiting many important places on the branch lines. The numerous streets of well-built houses around the two great railway stations at Aleppo present a very different aspect from the

cornfields I saw in 1906, when I was privileged to enter the city by the first construction train. Whilst on a journey that summer from Beyrout to Aintab I made the acquaintance at Hama of the chief engineer, who kindly permitted me to travel on the first train that passed through to Aleppo. Throngs of people were awaiting its arrival at 6 a.m., yelling and dancing about all over the lines, so that the engine-driver was obliged to let off steam from every valve, in order to clear the track as the train crawled into the unfinished station.

The line from Aleppo to Rayak is 206 miles in length, and belongs to a French company. It runs through fairly level, fertile country by the prosperous Arab towns of Hama, where there is a large suspension bridge over the Orontes, Hums, the ancient Emesa, Baalbec, famous for its gigantic ruined temples, to Rayak, whence an extension has been surveyed due south to a point on the Palestine Railway north of Ludd.

There was another French line from Hums to Tripoli, a distance of 65 miles, which was broken up by the Turks during the war. It may some day be rebuilt and extended through the fascinating ruins of Palmyra to Anah, on the Euphrates.

Another French company owns the Lebanon Railway, which runs from Beyrout to Damascus through the junction at Rayak; and the same company built the dismantled line which ran from Damascus to Mezerib.

The Lebanon Railway, with its rack-and-pinion

system, is a narrow-gauge line of many steep gradients, so that even the specially powerful engines are only able to draw a very small train at a slow pace to a height of 5000 feet at Ain Sofar. A very limited service only is possible on a line that entails considerable expense in its working, and for through traffic to Damascus the Haifa Railway may become its formidable rival. It will always be a popular railway, however, on account of the magnificent mountain scenery through which it passes, and the numbers of salubrious hill stations, to which the Syrians and Egyptians resort in the summer months.

The Hedjaz Railway is an important line built for the Turks by German engineers, from Damascus to Medina. It will probably be extended to Mecca, where it will be connected with a line to Jedda. Another branch is projected from Yambo, on the Red Sea, to Medina. Maan is the nearest station to the wonderful rock-hewn city of Petra; and a branch line is projected from Amman to Jericho, in the Jordan valley, where it will meet the carriage road to Jerusalem.

An interesting line which was torn up during the war ran from Deraa to Bosra-Eski-Sham, where preparations had been made for its extension to Salkhad. It is not impossible that this line may eventually be further extended through a piece of barren country, which is by no means a sandy desert, to the city of Baghdad, a distance of 400 miles only from the Mediterranean port of Haifa.

The line from Deraa to Haifa, under Mount Carmel, was partly built by a British company that surrendered its concessions to the Turks in 1902. A narrow-gauge line runs from Haifa to Acre, but the main line of the Palestine Railway, constructed during the Armistice, winds around the spur of Mount Carmel and proceeds in a straight line to Ludd.

The well-known metre line from Jaffa to Jerusalem was built and owned by a French company. The section from Ludd to Jaffa was destroyed by the Turks, but the more interesting portion from Ludd to Jerusalem remained intact, and is now in constant use.

The most important part of the new Palestine Railway was immensely useful to the military expedition, and promises to remain for all time one of the most valuable assets for the inhabitants of the Holy Land. It runs from Ludd to Gaza, and thence across the Sinaitic desert to Kantara, where it is at present connected with the Egyptian railways by a swing bridge across the Suez Canal, though in years to come its connection with Egypt will probably be made by means of a tunnel already designed to pass under the Canal.

Most of the Turko-German railways in Palestine were broken up, and remnants of the numerous Decauville lines could be traced in different parts of the country. Many new bridges and culverts are still being built, the more permanent lines are being strengthened, and new tracks are being constructed

Harbour and town of Muscat in Gulf of Oman, showing old Portuguese forts on both sides of harbour (p. 72).





Koweit, the nearest port in the Persian Gulf to Mesopotamia, showing the sea-front from roof of Sheikh's house (p. 88).

in different parts of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia.

The German concessions for the Baghdad Railway made provision for one train every day in each direction between Haidar Pasha and Aleppo, also for a weekly express train to Aleppo and a fortnightly express train both ways between Constantinople and the Persian Gulf. The express trains were to average 28 miles an hour for the first five years, after which the speed must be increased to 37 miles an hour. At this comparatively slow pace, the journey from Constantinople to Baghdad would take about two and a half days ; from London to Baghdad or Egypt, about five and a half days ; and from London to India, seven or eight days.

It is easy to imagine that this enormous network of new railways running through a central portion of the Eastern Hemisphere will revolutionise the conditions of Asia Minor, Syria, and Mesopotamia, and affect the future developments of Africa and the East.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERSIAN GULF

It may soon be possible to travel from London to Baghdad in about five days, and by aerial navigation in less than half that time; but the quickest, safest, and best route to Mesopotamia for the last quarter of a century has been by way of India, through the waters of the Persian Gulf—a matter of five or six weeks' journey from London to Baghdad.

From Bombay to Basra the voyager traverses the oldest sea-route in the world. In hoar antiquity the Babylonians and the Persians sent their ships from Mesopotamia to India and Ceylon. It was in the Persian Gulf that the art of navigation was acquired by the Phœnicians, who, after their migration to Syria, piloted their vessels from Tyre and Sidon to the ports of the British Isles. Nearly two thousand years before the Portuguese explored the waters of the Gulf, Alexander the Great sent his admiral, Nearchus, from the mouth of the Indus to the estuary of the Euphrates; and for four thousand years the traffic through these

phosphorescent waters enriched the leading empires of the East and played an important part in the history of the continent of Asia.

On my many voyages to and from Basra I learned to understand and appreciate something of the valuable services rendered to humanity by the achievements of the British Navy in securing the " freedom of the seas." In 1894 I took an interesting photograph in the Red Sea of a pretty little gunboat under full sail with its studding sails set, for it was on its way to the waters of the Far East to do duty of a similar kind to that which was done by the little gunboats of the Royal Indian Marine constantly engaged in policing the waters of the Persian Gulf. When on that voyage I reached Muscat, I was taken by the American missionary to see a group of eighteen negro lads who had recently been rescued from a slave dhow by a British gunboat, and were now being tenderly cared for at their mission school.

The inhuman traffic in slaves was one of the things encouraged by the Turks, especially when, for a short time, they got a footing at two small ports on the Arabian coast, and, by the energies of the great Midhat Pasha, established the feeble Kaimakamate of El-Hasa. They permitted slave dhows to fly the Ottoman flag for the express purpose of facilitating the importation of slaves into the markets of Basra and Baghdad, since the ownership of slaves was always lawful throughout the Turkish dominions. One of the thankless

tasks assigned to the Royal Indian Marine was to suppress this traffic in slaves, and the difficulties encountered were greatly increased when some of the dhows managed to secure from Jibuti the protection of the French flag.

MUSCAT is one of the hottest places on earth, and even the Sultan thought so in February 1895, when the Bedouin looted the town, destroyed his palace, and kept him a prisoner for a few days in one of the Portuguese forts till reinforcements arrived to rescue him. A similar revolt took place in January 1915, but it was speedily quelled with the aid of a small British force sent from India at a time when the turbulent tribesmen supposed we were too preoccupied to interfere with their piratical outbreaks.

A Persian writer, in attempting to describe the heat of Muscat, declares "that it melted the sword in its scabbard, and the gems that adorned the handle of his dagger were reduced to coal; that in the plain the chase was a perfectly simple matter, for the desert was filled with roasted gazelles." The Infernal Regions are said to be not far from Muscat, but I never stopped there long enough to verify the statement.

The British Residency, situated in the only breezy corner of a town that is furiously hot all the year round, is the finest house in Muscat and commands a beautiful view of the broad ocean through the great rocks to the right, as well as a perfect view to the left of the picturesque town and

harbour. The European cemetery is strangely situated in a sheltered nook with its own sandy beach between precipitous rocks, quite near the town, but unapproachable by land, so that every funeral must proceed by boats for more than an hour's row to this quiet resting-place on the Arabian shore. Here, amongst other heroes of the British race, lie the mortal remains of Bishop French, the famous seven-tongued Bishop of Lahore, who spent the last years of his saintly life as an honorary missionary to the Arabs.

Quite close to Muscat and connected with it by a narrow mountain path is the busy little seaport of Mattra, whose importance consists in its being the terminus of the caravan routes from the interior. These rocky harbours are remarkable for the enormous quantities of fish they contain, for fishes are so plentiful along the coast of Oman and so easily caught that they are used as fodder for cows and asses and utilised as manure for the fields.

The ruined Portuguese forts that crown the rugged heights of Hormuz and Muscat recall the days of good Queen Bess, when four enterprising Englishmen, after a voyage which lasted for months, dared to enter the Persian Gulf and, after visiting every port, were arrested for their impudence by the Portuguese and carried off as prisoners to Goa, in India. Their experiences however, within and without their prison walls, led eventually to the formation of the famous East India Company and to the speedy opening up of the Persian Gulf to

British traders. The Portuguese so persistently barred the way and obstructed our commercial enterprises that the British Navy in due course appeared before the forts of Hormuz to defend the rights of peaceful merchantmen. They were obliged to wrest the island from the Portuguese when they handed back to the care of the Persians the now opened gates of the Persian Gulf. Our merchants of the Levant Company in Aleppo had already begun to trade with Mesopotamia, and in 1618 the East India Company succeeded in establishing commercial relations with the port of Jask, on the Mekran coast, opposite Muscat, while another trading depot was soon afterwards opened at Bunder Abbas.

The voyager from India along the coast of Beluchistan sometimes calls at small, uninteresting places like Gwadir and Chàrbar, but he is agreeably surprised to discover at Jask a small colony of English people, who occupy a group of excellent buildings belonging to the Eastern Telegraph Company; for in this desolate and dreary corner of the Mekran coast there is an outpost of civilisation and an important British telegraph station.

BUNDER ABBAS, twice visited by Marco Polo, is an unattractive port, but one of peculiar interest from its connection with the changes and developments now taking place in the Near East. It is situated on the Persian coast at the very entrance to the Gulf, for the Gulf of Oman forms a kind of vestibule to the Persian Gulf proper, and

Bunder Abbas, with the island of Hormuz, guards the main entrance to this great inland sea.

This is the port for Kerman, Yezd, and Eastern Persia, and the roads traverse a number of mountain ranges before reaching the central plateau. It was for centuries the flourishing terminus of important overland trade routes from Europe, whence also the goods were passed on by sea to India.

In 1899 Russia contemplated extending her railway systems through Persia to Bunder Abbas, and it looked at one time as though serious friction would arise between England and Russia; but fortunately satisfactory negotiations resulted in an amicable settlement, and Russia abandoned her plan of securing a railway terminus in the Persian Gulf. About the same time we made a suggestion to Russia with regard to the organisation, under British officers, of a Persian gendarmerie for the robber-infested provinces of Southern Persia. Russia, however, considered that Great Britain would in this way obtain too much influence in the Shah's dominions, so we yielded to her representations and consented to the organisation of a Persian police force under Swedish officers. Immediately after the outbreak of war, the majority of these Swedish officers turned traitors, repudiated Persia's neutrality, and joined forces with the revolutionary bands that were organised under the German Prince Reuss. Sir Percy Sykes, our British Consul, together with the British colony and the Russian Consul, were driven out of Kerman and took refuge

at Bunder Abbas. A new arrangement was now speedily concluded with Russia, and Sir Percy Sykes began, at the fine British Consulate in Bunder Abbas, to organise an efficient military gendarmerie under British officers. It numbers something like 15,000 men, and Southern Persia is to-day more peaceful and secure than it has been for a century and more.

Over against Hormuz there is the terrible PIRATE COAST, where for centuries the Arab pirates were able to shelter in their well-protected lagoons, and whence they sallied forth to attack peaceful traders. The suppression of piracy was the most difficult of all the arduous enterprises undertaken by the British Navy in its determination to establish order and security throughout the Persian Gulf. A determined attack was made upon the pirates' stronghold in 1806, when one of their fleets was captured and they were compelled to sign certain treaties of peace. They completely failed, however, to abide by the terms of their contract, and continued to attack British merchant ships that traded in the Gulf, and on one occasion they actually secured a small British warship. The extent to which they were able to carry on their nefarious operations can be estimated if we remember that in 1818 the pirates commenced to ravage the west coast of India, and in the following year a fleet of sixty-four pirate vessels, manned by 7000 armed men, appeared off the coast of Kathiawar. It became necessary to organise a second large military expedition against the pirates, and by the combined

efforts of our Army and Navy we were able to subdue them effectively in 1820. Constant watch, however, has been necessary ever since that time to prevent some evil-minded chief from resuming the much-loved occupation of piracy. And here again, when the Turks occupied a small portion of the Arabian coast, this was one of the things which they persistently encouraged.

Gun-running was another favourite occupation which was with difficulty suppressed by the gunboats of the Royal Indian Marine that patrol the Persian Gulf waters. This illicit traffic in modern firearms supplied the turbulent tribes of the interior with the weapons they needed for robberies and raids, and its suppression produced a comparative cessation of tribal warfare in many inland provinces far removed from the northern shores of the Gulf, to the very frontier of India.

LINGAH.—The first and the prettiest port in the Persian Gulf on the north side, beyond Kishim, is another interesting Eastern town which has played its part in some of the most stirring events that precipitated the great World War. Lingah is a port of call for the British India steamers, and the Company's well-ventilated offices are a prominent feature of the busy foreshore, where at times an exceptionally large number of native boats are moored, mostly connected with the pearl fisheries not far away.

Some of the shops in the bazaars are owned by Indian Banians, who represent the most flourishing

class of traders at all the ports in the Persian Gulf. It is probably not realised in the British Isles how enterprising are some of our British Indian subjects, and how they have extended their commercial operations, under the security of the British Râj, far away from the shores of the Indian peninsula to some of the most remote corners of Asia and Africa.

In 1896 a German trading company began business, on what appeared to be a harmless scale, at Lingah, where the German agent, Wonckhaus, commenced to trade in oyster shells and mother-of-pearl; for the small island of Abu Musa, over against Lingah, marks the beginning of the great pearl bank which reaches to the islands of Bahrain. In addition to his interest in oyster shells, Wonckhaus became secretly connected with a concession to work the red oxide deposits that exist on Abu Musa. The island belongs to the Sheikh of Shargah, on the Arabian coast, who gave a concession to three Arabs to introduce machinery and work the red oxide deposits. One of these Arabs lived at Shargah, and the others were in business at Lingah. Nothing much was done, however, until ten years afterwards, when the Sheikh of Shargah learned one day to his intense surprise that the Germans practically claimed possession of his island. It transpired that the two Arabs in Lingah had acted on behalf of Wonckhaus, who had purchased their rights for the Hamburg-American Steamship Company and now openly claimed German protection for his

interests on the island. The Sheikh of Shargah refused to recognise the Germans' secret transactions and sought the intervention of Great Britain, in accordance with a treaty which had long existed between our authorities and the Sheikh; but the German agents ignored the rights of the Arab chief, so at length, in October 1907, a British gunboat towed a number of the Sheikh's sailing-ships to Abu Musa with 300 of his armed men on board. They removed the native workmen from the oxide deposits and transferred them to Lingah, but they foolishly fired, so the Germans declared, on a boat that was flying the German flag. The German press became furious, and every effort was made to magnify the incident into one of supreme international importance. Germany was unable to press the matter, for it was clear that the Sheikh of Shargah had a perfect right to object to the transfer to the Germans of the concession he had made to three of his own people, and moreover the chief's long-standing agreement with Great Britain expressly forbade the granting of such a concession to any European merchant, even though he were a British subject. Here, at least, we have a significant illustration of Germany's flagrant disregard for treaties, and one of her early attempts to tear up an inconvenient "scrap of paper" that did not meet with her approval.

BAHRAIN.—The great pearl bank which extends from near the Pirate Coast to Bahrain is the most wonderful feature of the Persian Gulf, and nearly

a million pounds worth of genuine as well as fabricated pearls are exported annually from the headquarters of the pearl trade at the so-called "Pearl Islands" of Bahrain. The largest of these islands is about 27 miles long by 10 broad, on the north side of which lies the largest town, Menamah, with about 10,000 inhabitants. This is the commercial centre for all the Bahrain Islands, containing the Post Office and the Custom House. Not far from Menamah are the ruins of an old town containing a mosque with two minarets in fair preservation and marked with inscriptions in the old Cufic character. The unexplored tumuli of the old Phœnician city of Gerrha are situated on the mainland of Arabia, and there are large numbers of similar mounds on the islands.

The islands are also remarkable for the number of underground rivers which they contain, and the parent source of the numerous lukewarm fresh-water springs must evidently be far away on the mainland of Arabia. One of the largest springs issues from the midst of a reservoir 30 yards wide and about 30 feet deep, similar to the great spring at Ras-Baalbec in Syria. The abundant stream of fresh water which flows from this spring averages 6 feet wide and 2 feet deep. Near Muharrek some of the springs bubble up under the sea not far from the shore, from which the natives procure water by using a long bamboo weighted at one end, so that when it reaches the bubbling spring the fresh water gushes out from the end of the bamboo just above sea-level.

Most of the export pearl trade is controlled by Indian Banias from Karachi, but the pearl fishers are Arabs, and for centuries they have enjoyed the exclusive right to work on the pearl bank. Their "trade union" regulations have always been recognised by the British authorities—so much so that British merchants and Indian Banias have never been allowed to seek for concessions that would in any way compete or interfere with the lawful privileges of these Arab fishermen. The bank is apportioned in sections to the different Sheikhs and towns of the Gulf, and during the pearl season, from June to October, a British gunboat is on guard keeping order amongst the workers.

The German capitalists of the great Berlin Bank and the Hamburg-American Steamship Company conceived a plan that would effectively break up this most ancient trade guild of the Arab pearl divers, so the first step was taken when in 1901 the German firm of Wonckhaus removed its headquarters from Lingah to Bahrain. The following year the German intriguers at Constantinople persuaded the Sultan to revive an imaginary claim to sovereignty over the great pearl bank, and at the same time to grant a concession to the Germans to work the fisheries by scientific methods. Their scheme, they thought, would bring untold wealth to the capitalists, a substantial share of the proceeds would be given to the Sultan, and, of course, a German fleet would be needed in the Persian Gulf to take over the duties of the British

gunboat and to substitute German discipline for the peaceful trade unionism so sedulously fostered by the British amongst the horde of superannuated pirates, who would still be needed as slaves for the fisheries and could be exploited for the promotion of German Kultur. Great Britain, however, informed the Sultan that his supposed sovereignty over the Persian Gulf fisheries was a vain delusion, and that a German monopoly could not therefore be recognised. Germany, however, made another attempt to secure a footing upon the great pearl bank, and asked the Sultan for a lease of the uninhabited island of Halul. This little island, situated in the centre of the fisheries, is immensely valuable to the fishermen in stormy weather, as it possesses an excellent harbour, well sheltered by rocks, and containing a secure anchorage for thousands of sailing-ships. Again the British authorities informed the Sultan that it was impossible for him to give away what did not belong to him, and Germany's little scheme for the possession of a coaling station or a fortified Heligoland in the midst of the Persian Gulf once more fell through. In 1905 the Germans approached the Sheikh of Bahrain and attempted to obtain direct from him concessions similar to those which had been sought from the Sultan of Turkey; but the Sheikh reminded the Germans of his treaties and agreements with Great Britain, and referred them for an answer to the British authorities. Once again Germany failed to secure by guile the possessions she had

hoped to seize ten years previously by force of arms. It was in 1895 that Germany was working out in Constantinople her preliminary plans for the invasion of the Persian Gulf, and the Turks were instigated to seize at once the islands of Bahrain. A fleet of native boats filled with armed men set out one day from the Turkish coast, but the British authorities had obtained information of the project, and a British gunboat broke up the fleet in the sight of the Turkish officials who were watching from the shore and waiting, when the fight was over, to cross and take possession of the newly acquired islands of Bahrain. The feeble hold which the Turks had secured on the coast of El-Hasa was finally relinquished in 1913, when the forces of Ibn Saood drove out the last remnants of the Turkish garrisons.

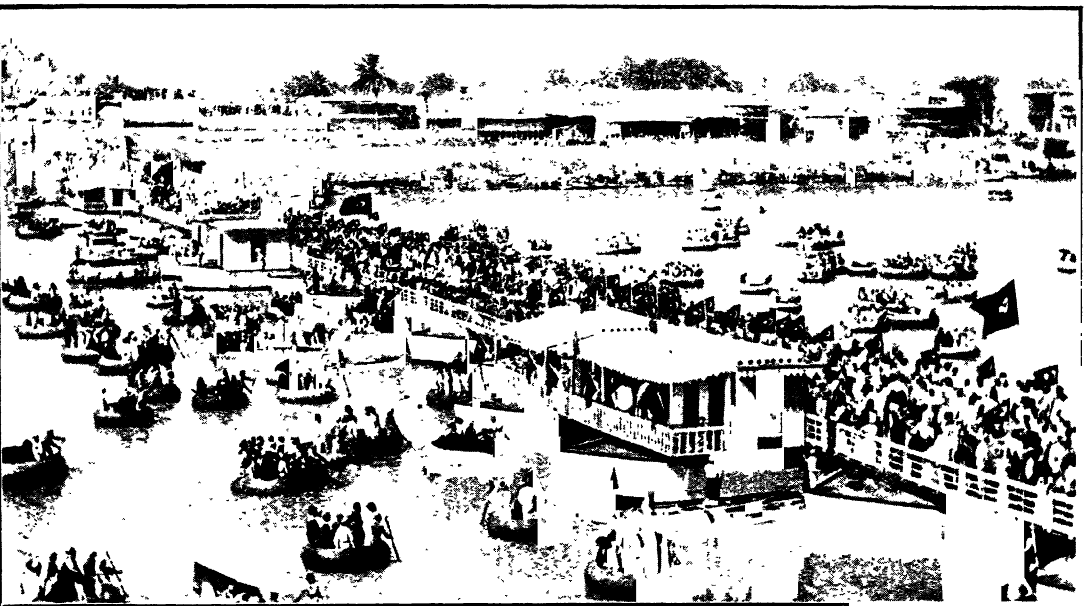
An additional interest attaches to Bahrain from the fact that the famous Force D under General Delamain, which so speedily captured Basra, was waiting at Bahrain when war was declared against Turkey in November 1914. The treacherous Turks had already admitted the *Goeben* and *Breslau* into Constantinople, and it was correctly surmised that they would attempt to destroy the British oil factory at Abadan, and make an attack on Koweit or Bahrain. On the 18th of October a force of 5000 men was despatched from India to Bahrain under the escort of H.M.S. *Ocean*, which was subsequently torpedoed in the Dardanelles. A curious obstacle suddenly blocked the way of the transports when

a huge waterspout compelled the whole convoy to alter its course, and the guns of H.M.S. *Ocean* opened fire upon an unexpected enemy, which subsequently, in another form of floods and rain, proved to be the most formidable foe to this same expeditionary force in Mesopotamia.

The waters around Bahrain contain a mass of reefs and shoals, so that ships drawing 18 feet have to anchor three miles out, while H.M.S. *Ocean*, which drew 27 feet, was obliged to anchor fourteen miles from land. Only very small boats can get through the shallow waters to within fifty yards of the shore, and, in the absence of a jetty, it was customary for passengers to be carried on the backs of the sturdy Arabs, or landed with the aid of donkeys when these were procurable.

The German agent of the Wonckhaus firm was arrested as soon as the officers of the convoy were able to effect a landing. He was taken in the act of signing a letter which turned out to be a correct report on the strength and composition of Force D, and furthermore stated that another 10,000 troops were shortly coming from India. This information was also correct, though it was not actually known to the English staff till some weeks later. The German agent, however, had already managed to despatch this information to Bushire and Basra immediately after the arrival of the transports.

BUSHIRE, or Abu-Shehir, the father of cities, is what Westerners would prefer to call the metropolis of the Persian Gulf. It is situated on the coast of



The opening of a new bridge at Baghdad. (See page 222)

Persia immediately to the north of Bahrain, whence the main roads proceed across the mountains to Shiraz and Teheran. The all-important British Residency and Consulate-General is at this place, and the well-trusted British Residents, who so honourably maintain the high traditions of British administrators, are unceasingly occupied with most important duties of an onerous nature, in preserving the security and peace that have so long prevailed in the Persian Gulf.

On one occasion, when visiting Bushire, I came across a group of Arab chiefs from the interior of Arabia. They informed me that they had come down to the Arabian coast in order to pay homage to the Sheikh of Koweit, for they recognised that Ibn Raschid, the Turkish representative, was no longer the most powerful man in Arabia. The chief of Koweit had advised them to visit the British Resident at Bushire, who would register their rights and privileges, and would take care that, as far as possible, justice should always be done to them in times of difficulty or danger.

Large numbers of pilgrims travel by the British India steamers from Bushire to Basra, and thence to the holy cities of Mesopotamia. On one occasion six holy Persians from the interior approached the British India agent for tickets to Basra, and they were informed that the mail steamer would arrive at six o'clock the following morning. Unaccustomed to such clockwork movements, they rebuked the agent for his confidence and for omitting to use

the customary " Inshallah," " for," said they, " the mail boat will only arrive if it be God's will." " Of course," replied the agent; " but I warn you to be here by six o'clock, or else you will miss the boat." So on the following morning they were sitting on the beach at dawn, when sure enough at six o'clock the mail steamer arrived four miles from the shore at its customary anchorage. " There it is," said the agent; " I told you it would be here." " Wonderful! Wonderful!" exclaimed the holy men. " This cannot be the work of God: it is the doings of the English."

I have had some disagreeable experiences at Bushire, when navigating the four miles of zigzag roadstead between the mail boat and the shore, which passengers must cross in the native sailing-boats. That little journey took me more than two hours one rough day, when we appeared to cover a good twelve miles as we tacked to and fro around the Persian Navy, before the wind would allow us to come alongside the steamer. The Persians can boast of one solitary warship, the *Persepolis*, which is generally stationed at Bushire, though sometimes, in favourable weather, it ventures as far as Lingah and Bunder Abbas.

I once asked the chief officer of our mail boat how they managed to navigate these difficult waters with so few accidents. He showed me the charts produced by the Admiralty from time to time since the Navy began a marine survey of the Gulf in 1785; he pointed out the beacons we have

erected and the buoys with which the British steamship companies have marked out the roadsteads and the great mud "Bar"; and he reminded me that the smart little *Patrick Stewart*, which I had frequently seen in the Gulf, was the telegraph ship that made itself responsible for the care of all the cables.

In September 1914 one of our Intelligence officers sent off from Bushire a young Afghan, who, on arrival at Basra, questioned the Turks about the possibility of a "Holy War." They informed him that they intended bringing an army through Afghanistan on its way to India, and that therefore he would be able to assist them in arousing the Afghans to respond to the demands of a Holy War. They permitted him, therefore, to ramble about the Turkish camps, and for nearly six weeks he watched the German agents of the great commercial Wonckhaus Company travelling up and down the Shat 'l Arab in a Turkish gunboat, instructing the Turks as to how they should hide their batteries and conceal their guns amid the date palms that line the banks of the Shat 'l Arab. This was at a time when the Turks in Constantinople were pretending to be sincere in their determination to maintain neutrality. The Afghan slipped out of the country two weeks before the outbreak of war, and the information which he communicated to his chief proved to be of real value to General Delamain in spotting the concealed batteries during the advance towards Basra.

KOWEIT.—The last port in the Persian Gulf is likely to become the most important of all. Koweit is now a prosperous town of about 50,000 inhabitants, where twenty years ago its population numbered less than 12,000. It is the cleanest place in the Gulf, and its wide, spacious streets present a striking contrast to the unsavoury slums in the ports on the Persian shore. It possesses more "bugalows" or sailing-ships than any other port in the Gulf; it is famous for its excellent dockyard, its numerous boat-builders, and its up-to-date condenser, the largest of its kind in the world, which provides for the inhabitants 450 tons of fresh water daily, distilled from the deep blue sea. About 400 boats are sent annually from this port to the pearl fisheries, and hundreds of cargo boats not only visit all the ports in the Gulf; but extend their operations to India, East Africa, and the ports in the Red Sea.

These well-travelled mariners are the news-vendors and journalists of the East. When they brought back their date cargoes from Basra in the winter of 1914, it is reported that they spread abroad their own dramatic account of British victories. "A British steamer fired two shots. At the first shot 300 Turks fell, at the second shot 400; then the governors fled, and the Turkish troops followed them in flight from Basra."

Koweit is equally important to the internal affairs of Arabia as it is to its external relations. The main roads for pilgrims and caravans proceed from this rendezvous to Nejd, Mecca, the Jebel Shammar,

and Damascus. It is quite possible a railway will some day be constructed from Suez to Koweit in almost a straight line through Akaba and the Jauf.

The town is improving very rapidly, the value of land has been steadily rising for some years past, and there are already some very fine buildings. The Sheikh's palace has been vastly improved in recent years, and instead of the old Turkish flag with the crescent and star he flies his own distinctive red flag with the word " Koweit " embroidered upon it in white letters. It is the Sheikh's custom to sit in a coffee-house or reception hall near one of the gates, where he receives visitors, dispenses justice, and watches the passers-by. Another nice building in the place is the American Mission Hospital, constructed of steel and reinforced concrete, with two comfortable residences in the same compound. Some of the people tried to organise an opposition hospital a few years ago and placed a Turkish doctor in charge, but the adventure came to naught, and the Sheikh of Koweit one day handed over the surgical instruments and the microscope as a present to the American Mission Hospital. A land telegraph has now established communications between Koweit and Basra, and there is also a temporary wireless installation.

There are always many large Bedouin encampments around Koweit, belonging to different tribes. The Abu Suleib is a large tribe that claims a Christian origin. Its name is the diminutive of the Arabic word for a cross, and in connection with

their rites of circumcision they make use of a small cross that is decorated with brightly coloured ribbons. Some authorities suppose they are descended from the Levantines of the Crusaders' armies, who remained behind when the bulk of the Crusaders returned to Europe.

In February 1915 the Viceroy of India paid a visit to Basra, and called in at Koweit, where, on behalf of King George, he conferred the K.C.S.I. upon the famous Sheikh Mubarek.

It is a most fortunate circumstance for the East that Arabia produced two wonderful men during the last half-century. They both had much to do with the trend of political events. One of them was the Sheikh of Koweit, a far-sighted, untutored Arab who ruled his provinces with a strong hand and shaped the policy of so many of the inland tribes. He was a great reformer, and the prosperity of Koweit is due almost entirely to his foresight and enterprise. When he commenced to rule in Koweit, his people were content to drink the brackish water that could be found anywhere by digging a few feet in the sands. Mubarek organised a fleet of boats which sailed regularly backwards and forwards to the Shat 'l Arab for the purpose of bringing fresh water, a distance of about 70 miles. He then introduced a steam tank-ship, which was found to be too expensive for the purpose; and at last he caused to be installed the magnificent condenser, which appears to be working remarkably well.

On the advice of Great Britain, he devoted himself to the attainment of one great object, namely, the uniting together in bonds of friendship all the prominent chiefs of the Arabian peninsula; and in this endeavour he was seconded by the other remarkable man, the chief of Nejd, who has also been knighted and is now known as Sheikh Sir Abd-el-Aziz Ibn Saood. Sheikh Mubarek died in November 1915, and was succeeded by his son, Sheikh Jabr, who wisely determined to carry on the policy of his distinguished father. Ibn Saood is undoubtedly one of the most influential and important men in Arabia, and, in spite of the fanaticism of his Wahabi followers, he has exerted his authority in support of every attempt made to bring union and concord amongst the Arab tribes, and to open up the Arabian peninsula to trade and the influences of modern civilisation.

This remarkable town of Koweit is chiefly famous, however, for its magnificent harbour, which contains about 25 square miles of deep water and is well protected at its entrance by a small island. It was this wonderful harbour that attracted the cupidity of the German intriguers. When the Germans completed the survey of the Baghdad Railway, they decided that their important trunk line must terminate at Koweit, and four very deliberate attempts were made to get possession of the Sheikh's magnificent harbour.

In the year 1900 the German Railway Commission, headed by the Consul-General from Constantinople,

appeared at Koweit with an offer to purchase or lease an area of 25 square miles; but the Sheikh informed the Germans that they were a little too late, for it was in 1899 that our agreements with Mubarek were strengthened in such a way that he was not permitted to give any of his territory to the Sultan's German friends without the sanction of the British authorities. A second attempt was made with the aid of Ibn Raschid, who, in the pay of the Germans and the Turks, attempted to pick a quarrel with the chief of Koweit and by force of arms deprive him of his territory. This scheme also came to naught through the timely assistance of Ibn Saood; but a third attempt was made, when a Turkish army of 14,000 men was mustered at Nasiriyeh for the purpose of invading the Sheikh's territory and forcing from him all that the Germans and the Turks required. Great Britain, however, notified the Sultan that this could not be allowed, and that we were prepared to stand by our written agreements and defend with armed forces this independent chief of Arabia. The Turkish Navy was ordered surreptitiously to effect a landing at Koweit and to take prisoner the Sheikh Mubarek; but our naval authorities obtained timely warning of their intention, and while the rusty Turkish gunboat was struggling for three days to raise the anchor and get up steam at Basra, a British gunboat appeared upon the scene from Bombay, and the Turks were forbidden to land men in the harbour of Koweit. Still another desperate effort was made,

when the Turks pretended to champion the cause of the Sheikh's nephew, who claimed the chieftainship of Koweit; a flotilla of native boats filled with armed men was mobilised at the island of Bubian, and was proceeding to make a raid upon Koweit when it was suddenly intercepted and immediately dispersed by an ever-ready and ever-vigilant British gunboat.

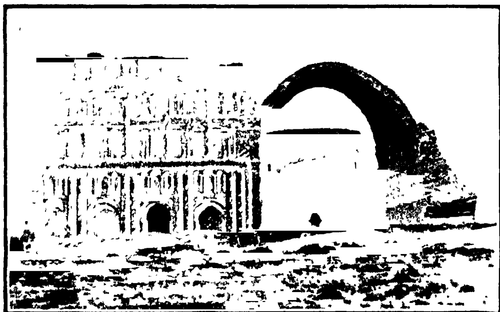
Thus ended the last of a series of conflicts with pirates and Prussians, slave-traders and Turks, for the maintenance of good order, just dealing, liberty, and peace in this the most primitive of the world's waterways, the birthplace of the earliest of ancient mariners, the cradle of navigation. After a century's hard work, the British Navy has accomplished something in the Persian Gulf, and the world must acknowledge that this something should be called "the Freedom of the Seas."

CHAPTER V

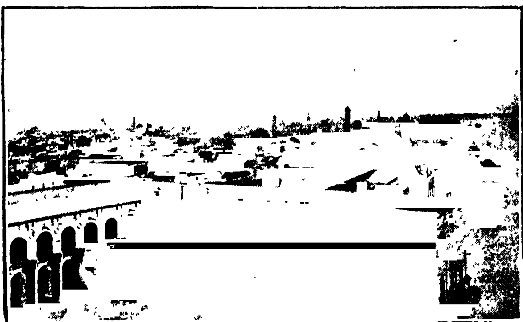
THE BASRA BAR

GERMANY'S ambitious intentions were thwarted to some extent by the existence of a natural barrier known as the Basra Bar. The enormous quantities of alluvial deposit brought down by the two great rivers of the Tigris and the Euphrates have created through the centuries an immense deposit of mud which blocks the entrance to the great river known as the Shat 'l Arab. It is believed that the Persian Gulf at one time reached as far north as Kurna, so that the whole of the country around Basra has, in the course of millenniums, been created by the mud brought down with the Mesopotamian floods. It is claimed that the land around the estuary of the Tigris and Euphrates has been advanced at the rate of 72 feet every year. The Bar to-day begins not far from Fao and extends for about seven miles out to sea. A narrow channel that runs through the Bar was marked with much difficulty by the British steamship companies, who placed buoys here and there for the guidance of mariners. It was often extremely difficult to discover this

(1)



(2)



(3)



(1) The Arch of Chosroes at Ctesiphon (p. 140).—(2) A view of Baghdad from the Infantry Barracks, looking south.—(3) A primitive irrigation "Cherad" at Kût'l'Amara (p. 110).

channel, and on one occasion, whilst proceeding to Basra by the mail steamer, we missed it and were stuck in the mud for over thirty hours, with the engines at full speed the whole time. The Basra Bar was naturally a very great handicap to all shipping entering the ports of Basra, Mohammerah, and Abadan. Only vessels of less than 18 feet draught could cross the Bar, and then of course it was necessary to follow carefully the buoyed channel.

It was this Bar which presented serious difficulties to the British Expedition. It caused considerable delay in bringing reinforcements and supplies to the troops in Mesopotamia. All the larger vessels were obliged to tranship the troops and stores outside the Bar into smaller boats which conveyed them to Basra. It was in the autumn of 1914 that our military operations began, and, on account of the intense summer heat in Mesopotamia, all our most important military movements subsequently took place in the winter; but it is always in the autumn and winter months that furious storms are met with at the northern end of the Persian Gulf. The difficulties of transhipment on the high seas were therefore considerably increased at a time when so much bad weather prevailed.

The Bar is still a formidable obstacle to the commercial development of Mesopotamia, as all incoming and outgoing vessels have to be lightened, a slow and dangerous business involving considerable expense. It is calculated that a ship of 8000 tons is generally delayed about ten days, which is

roughly a third of the time it should take for such a ship to perform the entire journey from Basra to the British Isles.

This was unfortunate while the war lasted, when tonnage was so scarce, and it is still a serious matter, with a world-shortage of food-supplies and the demands for economy in the shipping world. The price of petroleum in the British Isles might have been considerably reduced if there had been no Basra Bar. It is estimated that the removal of the difficulties created by this deposit of mud would mean a gain equivalent to 16 per cent. of the cargo boats and 9 per cent. of the oil-tank steamers that proceed to and from the oil refinery of Abadan.

British engineers have begun to tackle the problems of the Basra Bar. The whole matter has been thoroughly investigated by more than one expert, and they declare that the task of adequately dredging the Bar will not be a very lengthy process nor a specially expensive one. The bottom is soft, there are apparently no rocks, the current of the river is swift, and the banks can be suitably built up. When this mud deposit is scientifically dealt with and brought under control, it is possible that another Port Said may arise at the mouth of the great river, somewhere near the entrance to the Persian Gulf.

Basra is the chief port for Mesopotamia, but it is situated about 70 miles from the Persian Gulf, on the right bank of the Shat 'l Arab. The Euphrates, the Tigris, and the Karun rivers empty themselves

into this magnificent waterway, which is about 120 miles in length, from 30 to 60 feet deep, and averages about 1000 yards in width.

The German engineers who surveyed the Baghdad Railway sought for a terminus on the shores of the Gulf beyond the Bar, as they contemplated using their great Hamburg-American liners and anticipated the eventual establishment of a naval base. For such a purpose Basra was deemed unsuitable, and in 1899 a German cruiser began to investigate the Persian Gulf, assisted by a mysterious party of German scientists who suddenly appeared at Bunder Abbas. In 1906 a regular service of steamers was started by the Hamburg-American Steamship Company, and the first steamer, gaily bedecked with bunting, entered the Gulf ports with its band playing the inevitable "Deutschland über Alles."

In spite of the champagne dinners offered free of charge to the Arab chiefs, the native officials, and all their friends, Germany failed to secure a footing on the shores of the Persian Gulf, and seven miles of mud remained as the most serious obstacle to the completion of her railway schemes.

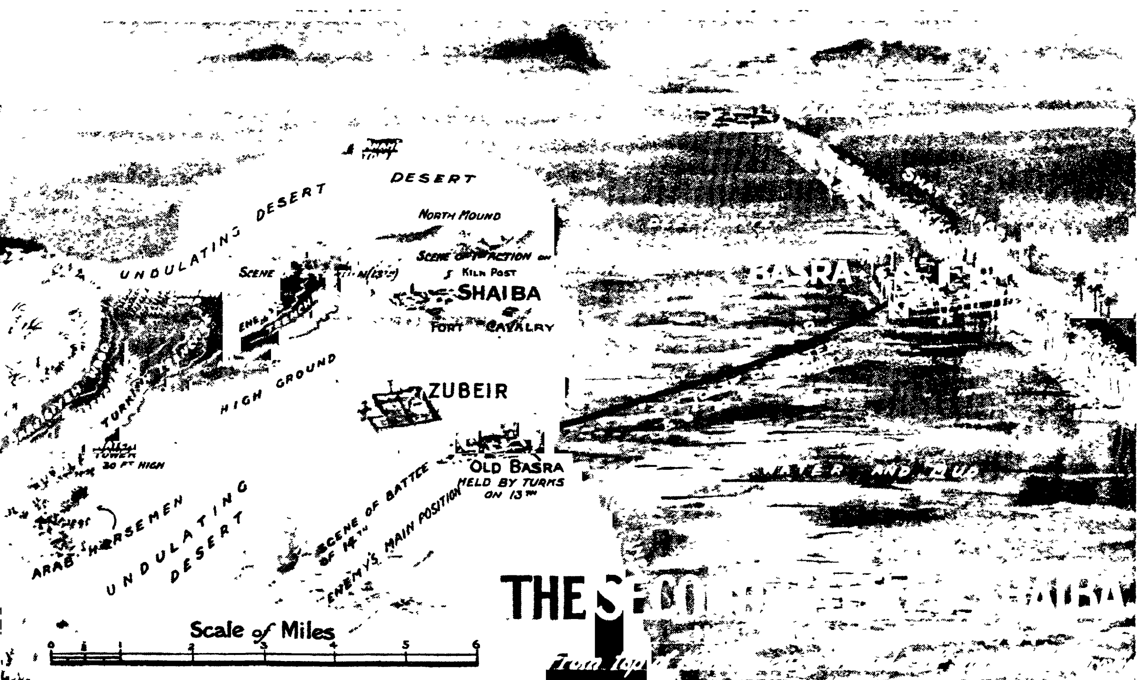
At the outbreak of war the famous Force D started from Bahrain and crossed the Bar on the 7th of November 1914, fortunately anticipating, *by a few hours only*, the Turkish mine-laying steamers, that were satisfactorily accounted for, or they might have sealed the entrance to the Shat 'l Arab and the fate of Mesopotamia.

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF SHAIBA, 14TH APRIL 1915

WHILST travelling through Damascus in the summer of 1919, I made special inquiries from the Emir Feisal and his advisers as to the reason why the Arab revolt took place soon after the fall of Kût 'l Amara. It was the general impression in England that our failure to relieve Kût was a very serious blow to our prestige in the East, so we were agreeably surprised two months afterwards to learn that the Shereef of Mecca had thrown in his lot with the Allies. It appears, however, that the die was cast long before the retreat from Ctesiphon, and our earlier successes around Basra sufficed to encourage the Arabs to snatch the long-looked-for opportunity of shaking off the shackles of the Turk.

The second battle of Shaiba has been regarded as one of the smallest of our little "side shows," but it made a very great impression upon the Arabs, and the news of this "decisive" victory over the Turks spread like wild-fire through Arabia. It was the last attempt the Turks made to retake Basra. During the first battle of Shaiba, on the


DESERT
UNDULATING DESERT
NORTH MOUND
SCENE
KILN POST
SHAIBA
FORT
CAVALRY
HIGH GROUND
ZUBEIR
TOWER
30 FT HIGH
OLD BASRA
HELD BY TURKS
ON 13TH
SCENE OF BATTLE
OF 14TH
ENEMY'S MAIN POSITION
ARAB HORSEMEN
UNDULATING
DESERT
BASRA
AND MUD
Scale of Miles
0
1
2
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THE

3rd of March 1915, they had attempted a diversion with 12,000 troops at Ahwaz, a hundred miles to the east, but were defeated in both engagements. They rallied a second time around Shaiba with 15,000 Turkish troops and 10,000 Arabs. So confident were the Turks and the Germans of their ability to drive us out of Mesopotamia that a demonstration took place in Baghdad on the 14th of April. Amid the firing of guns, a vast crowd with bands and banners marched through the streets to the German Consulate, where mutual congratulations took place upon the "recapture of Basra." Shortly afterwards, however, the news reached Baghdad that the Turks had been thoroughly beaten, that the Arabs had turned upon them in their retreat, and that the Turkish commander had shot himself in the presence of all his officers.

A vivid account of this decisive little battle reached me in a private letter from one of the junior officers who took part in it. I venture to reproduce the greater part of it, as it illustrates the character of those many battles so bravely fought by the men to whom we owe the redemption of Mesopotamia and the liberation of Arabia.

"Our long-looked-for scrap has come at last, and with a vengeance. The fight of 14th April was a veritable battle, long drawn and lasting seven hours. We just managed to take the trenches at one locality in time before dusk set in; I was afraid at one time our fighting that day would bring no material

result. I said so at the time to young C., who was in the fighting-line with me: ten minutes afterwards the trenches were taken.

"It was really a three days' battle, commencing with minor operations in and around Shaiba, starting in the morning of the 12th at six o'clock, and ending up with the battle of Barjisiyeh on the 14th.

"On the evening of the 11th news was brought in that the Turkish army was advancing. We stood to our trenches and alarm posts all night, and at daylight the whole of the horizon (west, north-west, and south) was occupied by the enemy, extending from Ana's Tomb to Old Basra (*vide* map), at a range of 3500 yards.

"Their guns and ours opened fire, and a few of the enemy approached in one or two places to within 1000 yards of our defences. In one case I fired about thirty rounds: though I could not hit them, my shots went very close, and they decamped to a safer distance.

"The enemy were entrenching all round, and our gun-fire was carried on all day. We had ten men wounded. Maj.-Gen. M. arrived that night from Basra, and took over command of the troops here. He has just lately arrived from the Suez Canal with a brigade. He brought with him the 24th Punjabis (one of his brigade). His brigade would have crossed earlier in the day, but General N. thought they would be cut up by superior numbers crossing water and mud from Old Basra.

"*Luckily* this was done, and he crossed over later

in 'bellums' with the 24th. That night the enemy came in close and sniped everywhere; we met them with fusillades. General M. (a man of action) grasped the situation at once, and within three hours sent the 104th Rifles and the Cavalry Brigade, supported by the 24th and Dorsets, to counter-attack large numbers of the enemy—in this spot a good few Arabs—supported by the guns. The Cavalry Brigade charged at North Mound. This made them retire, which they did under shrapnel fire. The casualties in this brush were, I think, three officers killed; total killed and wounded about sixty.

"After this another attack was launched at the enemy's advance trenches due west of Kiln Post, at about 2000 yards distant. The two double companies of the 119th and the whole of the 104th took part in this. The trenches were not tenaciously held, and they retired from them when we were about 500 yards off.

"I counted about forty killed in my D Company. Next morning General M. decided to go for the Turkish Army. It was very hot—not a breath of air—when we advanced from camp about 10 a.m. Our numbers scarcely totalled 5000, with two field batteries, one horse battery, one mountain battery, and one brigade of cavalry. The infantry regiments were: Dorsets, Norfolks, 24th Punjabis, 119th (our link), the 120th, 110th, and 117th Mahrattas—sappers and miners. The 104th and 48th were left behind to guard our camp.

"It is certain that the Turks fully expected to

beat us and take Basra: we did not know they had so many. They laid a cunning plan: they sent troops forward to attack and draw us on, while they prepared a strong position two miles east of Barjisiyeh Wood. They had their best troops there—ten Stamboul regiments and in all twenty-four regular battalions. Reliable authorities have placed the infantry at 15,000, and Arab horsemen 10,000. They were armed with Mauser rifles and had a few guns; they were plentifully supplied with small-arm ammunition. They chuckled with glee when they saw us advancing, and thought they had us completely, as we were outflanked by superior numbers. The 10,000 Arab horsemen had assembled about a mile east of the Watch Tower, and were waiting like vultures for the time to come in. Truly we were 'up agin' a big thing.' We were in reserve at first; at 1 p.m. No. 1 Company, 119th, and No. 4 Company reinforced the firing line of the 16th Brigade (the Dorsets and the 24th right). No. 1 Company went on the right of the 24th, and No. 4 Company on the left of the Dorsets. I am speaking of the 16th Brigade only now—the 18th I will leave out. At 2 p.m., or thereabouts, this line had reached within 400 yards of a section of Turkish trenches. There was a continual hail of bullets, and things looked uncomfortable. About this time I was with the three remaining companies in reserve, L. having gone off previously as escort to guns. We were almost under the same fire, the only cover being a slight rise of ground in front.

"Bullets were hitting the ground everywhere; it was a marvel we were not all hit, but a few were. We were then only 400 yards from the firing-line. At about three o'clock things were looking a bit critical and ammunition was running short. I was then ordered to advance with F Company and reinforce and assume command, as L. had been wounded (he died later). I arrived safely, some of my men being hit. I honestly never expected to reach them without some sort of hit. I was not even scratched. No. 1 (the Rawat D Company) were behaving splendidly; they never flinched and were as keen as mustard. I was filled with admiration for them. C. was very pleased to see us: F Company brought new life and ammunition.

"We continued to blaze away steadily at the trenches only 400 yards away, a little down the slope—we were practically on the crest. Their trenches were marvellously well situated. I borrowed a rifle from a Sepoy and fired about 100 rounds, the Sepoy handing me charges. At about 4.45 p.m. I said to C.: 'If we don't take those trenches our endeavours will not be of any use, and it will mean defeat and retirement.' At 5 p.m. the enemy seemed to be wavering, as the 18th Brigade were forcing them back about 1000 yards on our right. At this period General M. said the trenches *must* be taken.

"Suddenly one felt a feeling come down the firing-line, and before one could realise anything—we had no orders—we were cheering and rushing at the trenches. We, the Dorsets, and the 24th arrived

about the same time. The Dorsets, of course, initiated the charge, but it was practically a dead heat. Half the enemy turned and fled, the other half surrendered; we took many prisoners, but hundreds must have left the trenches before we advanced. The three companies wanted to carry on the pursuit, and I had to restrain their ardour.

"By Gad! I felt relieved. Just did the trick in time. It was getting dusk, and there were the dead to be collected and the wounded to be succoured. Goodness only knows what would have happened to the wounded if we had not been successful! It was a question of valuable minutes of daylight.

"The enemy's camp was in Barjisiyeh Wood, about 1500 yards to the west of the trenches we captured. So great was their demoralisation that they left their camp standing, leaving every mortal thing they had there—food, cooking-pots, etc. The guns shelled them and their camp unmercifully; thousands must have been killed. I heard that the Arabs, seeing the Turks were not doing very well, took all their camels, the hired transports, and cleared off altogether. To-day the Turkish Army is no more.

"In our attack on the trenches we were not helped by the artillery till just before we charged. All the senior gunner officers were *hors de combat*, and it was hard to co-operate. They did their work well; they must have killed thousands, and to them a large share of the victory is due, as well as to our determined advance.

"The 119th and the 120th have made a great name for themselves. I do not think there are better native regiments as regards spirit and pluck in the whole of India. The best of the old Bombay regiments have added to their good names; they never once flinched or got their tails down. The 120th lost three officers killed and many wounded.

"We were very lucky, only one officer killed and one wounded. We lost more native officers, viz. two killed and three wounded. I think the 120th lost as much as any regiment—we had 22 killed and about 90 wounded. My pony was wounded twice, in the shoulder and lower lip; the former the vet. says will not, he thinks, be serious—the bullet has gone in.

"Our doctor did gallant things, helping Major L. out of the firing-line, bandaging him and others under heavy fire, and carrying him away on his back, till Major L. fainted and fell off. Young E. was ordered up with mules, carrying boxes of ammunition to be taken to the firing-line (there was little or no cover). Ten mules were either killed, wounded, or fell; two muleteers were killed, and three wounded. E. escaped without a scratch. All the ammunition reached the firing-line.

"Next morning, 15th April, numbers of Turks came in and surrendered. We captured one and a half million rounds of ball in their camp, and much shell ammunition. There is no doubt the whole thing was engineered from Constantinople and took months of preparation, and that they were confident

of success. We hear that the Arabs in Basra, before the battle, were getting very insolent and overbearing—in fact, going as far as getting flags ready for the victorious Turkish Army.

"They heard the news before we did, and immediately commenced salaaming and grovelling. No doubt Basra was their objective. The heat of that day was terrific—not a breath of air—and our thirst was awful: we got so parched. We did not get back to our camp till 9 p.m.

"Our casualties, I hear, amounted to over 1100. The Turkish losses amounted to 6000, including prisoners. We had actually five companies in the firing-line, two companies in reserve, and one doing escort to the guns. The Turks had six of the latest machine guns from Berlin. They did a lot of damage. The trench we dashed up to had none in action, but one was found the next day in the rear of the trench, and it has been handed over to us as a trophy."

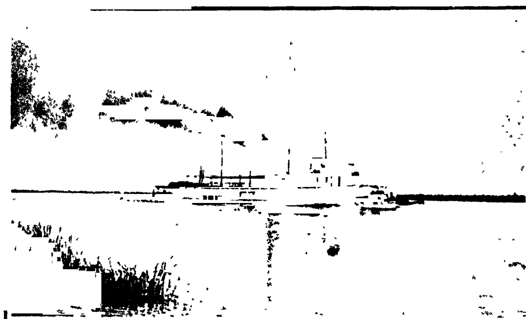
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(3)



(1) Courtyard of a native house in Kût'l'Amara (p. 108).—(2) The inhabitants of Kût'l'Amara watching the arrival of the British steamer (p. 242).—(3) River steamboat "Julnar" that made the last attempt to relieve the beleaguered garrison in Kût'l'Amara (p. 118).

CHAPTER VII

THE HEROIC DEFENCE OF KÛT

A TOWN unheard of before the war, Kût 'l Amara has now become an historic name-place which will long be remembered as the centre of valiant conflicts and the scene of a glorious resistance to the bitter end by a gallant section of the Army of the British Empire. The story of the siege of Kût is an episode in the history of the war which should make us proud of the men who held on amid suffering, privation, and death, and by doing so rendered, as we shall show, invaluable aid to the cause of Great Britain and her Allies.

A comparatively small town of about 6000 inhabitants, Kût is situated on the eastern bank, at the extremity of a large loop in the Tigris. Its prosperity chiefly depended upon the river traffic, for it was the first place at which the British steamers called on their way from Baghdad to Basra, and the last stopping-place before Baghdad on the journey north. The native sailing-boats that plied between the Euphrates and the Tigris had to pass through the Shat 'l Hai, which leaves the

Tigris near the town of Kût, where they invariably called. It became, therefore, a centre of retail trade for the Arab villages, and was more distinctly Eastern than Basra, Amara, or Baghdad. There were not many houses in the place suitable for European habitations; herein lay the first of the many drawbacks to the maintenance of a successful resistance.

The single-storied and flat-roofed dwellings of the natives are mostly built of mud and are crowded together into an irregular mass, through which a maze-like tangle of narrow streets twist and turn. These streets are half choked up with refuse and heaps of filth, and are so narrow that you have to take refuge in a doorway to allow a laden donkey to pass; otherwise the dirty, wet water-skins of the water-carrier will leave an unpleasant mark on your clothing.

Our illustration gives a good idea of the interior of one of these houses. The poles to the left of the group of Arabs are fixed in a pyramid of mud and are placed at the four corners of the bed for the support of the mosquito netting. The upturned basket protects the villagers' larder from the pariah dogs and the cats that prowl about night and day. The kitchen range, where the food for the family is cooked, is immediately behind the basket, and consists of a few bricks plastered with mud, easily made and quickly repaired. The smoke from the fireplace has left its mark upon the wall. One of the chief duties of the women-folk is to see that the

water-jar to the left of the basket is always filled with drinking-water from the Tigris. The rough wooden bench to the right of the Arabs is used as a "divan" by day and a bedstead by night, when the bedding is brought out from one of the rooms. In front of the bench is the baby's cradle.

In such surroundings were our men huddled together during the siege, and the mud houses had to be used for all purposes by the beleaguered forces of General Townshend. Some were larger than others, and a few possessed an upper story; but they were all constructed on the same plan, with a series of rooms surrounding an open courtyard. As a protection from the great heat of the sun, all the walls are thick, the rooms dark, and the windows small. It was into a group of such houses that our field ambulance was moved and billeted during the siege. Our sick and wounded were here comparatively safe from rifle bullets which came over at all angles in a continual sheet by day and night with the most remarkable intensity. Some, of course, would penetrate doors and windows and find their billet in some poor fellow's inside. Naturally, these mud walls provided little or no protection against shells, which fell occasionally into all the different hospitals.

A Turkish aviator one day dropped a bomb into the British General Hospital, which killed twenty-two patients and wounded many others It would be unjust to accuse the Turks of firing deliberately at the hospitals, for in such a small town the hospitals

were unavoidably near all the legitimate targets; and it is satisfactory to note that the Turkish aviator responsible for bombing the British hospital came in person to apologise to our senior medical officer as soon as possible after the surrender.

A very different state of things existed at the Turkish base in Baghdad, where there are large numbers of very comfortable buildings which were at the disposal of the Turks so long as they held the city, and in which our own wounded were quickly accommodated after the capture of Baghdad by General Maude. When our troops entered the city it was found that the Turks had destroyed all British property except the fine British Residency, which had been used as a Turkish hospital while we were fighting to relieve the garrison at Kût. But the tide turned at last in our favour, and these fine buildings, including the Turkish barracks, provided excellent accommodation for our troops and wounded when the Turks were driven out and compelled to find uncomfortable accommodation in the villages north of Sâmara, where the houses are as bad as those in Kût.

There is a very good example in Kût 'l Amara of the curious way in which the Arabs irrigate their gardens. The Mesopotamian "cherad" is one of the most primitive irrigation wheels possible: propped up on the trunks of date palms, a rope is carried round a squeaky wooden wheel. At one end a mule or cow is secured, and at the other end a leathern bucket, which is let down into the water

when the animal comes to the top of an incline, and is drawn up when the animal descends. The water is emptied into a channel and flows away to the gardens. The British steamer which plies up and down the Tigris is generally lashed to a landing-stage at Kût 'l Amara by the side of one of these primitive irrigation wheels. The traveller who took the photograph relates what happened while the steamer stayed the night at Kût. The squeaking of the wheel kept him awake, and he asked one of the officers if he would put a little grease on the wheel. He kindly did so and the squeaking ceased; but the next morning the owner of the "cherad" came and asked the officer what he had done to his wheel, for the "cherad" made no noise and the animals would not work unless the "cherad" squeaked; but the officer persuaded him it would soon be all right and would shortly begin to squeak as usual. General Townshend asked for vegetable seeds, and when these were supplied to him by aeroplanes, these primitive "cherads" were used for irrigating his vegetable gardens.

It will be remembered that the chief event which led up to the siege of Kût was the strange result of the battle of Ctesiphon, near the ruins of the arch of Chosroes II., within twenty miles of Baghdad. At the conclusion of the battle, General Townshend found himself in possession of the field, but his losses in killed and wounded, added to the absence of any chance of reinforcement, compelled him to retire upon Kût.

General Townshend's main army reached Kût from Ctesiphon on the 2nd of December 1915, having marched fifty miles in the last thirty-six hours, in addition to fighting a heavy rearguard action on the 1st of December. The last of the troops arrived in Kût on 3rd December, and on the following day the Turks got their guns into position and began shelling Kût. The British troops were working feverishly night and day, digging defensive positions, pits, and trenches, and erecting huge walls of compressed fodder to provide shelter for the field ambulances.

The wounded had to be accommodated for a time under a small group of palm trees which was, however, swept night and day by a hail of bullets and shells. Many, of course, were killed, and some had wonderful escapes. While a medical officer was attending the wounded, a bullet came into his pocket, perforated his pocket case, and was thus turned in its course and prevented from inflicting a serious wound. On the 5th of December the troops were completely shut off from the outer world, from which date is counted the hundred and forty-seven days of this remarkable siege, remarkable amongst other reasons for the substantial amount of help it afforded to the Allied cause.

During December, and for the greater part of January, the garrison struggled for its very existence against the repeated onslaughts of the enemy. It not only successfully repelled every attack, but it occasionally made sorties, capturing both

prisoners and material. It was rumoured (though some declare the incident occurred at Gallipoli) that in one of the sorties the men captured an unsavoury goat and a still more unclean Turk. The following day, when things were dull, a discussion arose as to which was worse, the smell of a goat or the smell of a Turk, and the senior officer volunteered to act as umpire. The goat was then brought in, whereupon the umpire fainted; then the Turk was brought in, whereupon the goat fainted!

On Christmas Eve the relief forces unwittingly rendered an invaluable service to the hard-pressed forces of General Townshend. Their cavalry raided a Turkish stronghold named Ghussab's Fort. They blew up and burnt the place, carrying away sheep, cattle, and timber.

On the same day the Turks were making another desperate effort to enter Kût, and for the first and only time penetrated the British trenches. After battering our line with shells, they got a footing in the north-east bastion. Within a few hours, however, they were again driven out; and so, as always during this prolonged siege, the Turks were completely repulsed, with losses which were acknowledged to be severe. Christmas Day was therefore celebrated in fine spirit by both the beleaguered within and by the relief columns outside Kût. The camel thorn and caper berries were labelled as holly and mistletoe and served for decorations. The singing at church parade was particularly hearty, and the customary Christmas festivities were

kept up with continuous choruses till late in the night.

Imagine, though, the plight of the sick and the wounded, who were obliged to lie helpless, confined in a small place within rifle range and shell fire from every point of the compass, and returning to the trenches as soon as convalescent without rest or change. Many a man must have envied his brothers in Europe who, within a few hours of being wounded, found themselves in the comfort of some well-appointed base or home hospital, with every luxury, beds to lie on, and perhaps an occasional drive or other form of entertainment during convalescence. In Kût, however, for example, on one afternoon alone the Indian General Hospital had sixteen shells into it, a condition of affairs which could hardly conduce to a rapid recovery when nerves were already shaken by some severe wound. The men were very patient, and they all lived, on the whole, a most cheery and hopeful existence, broken occasionally by waves of depression as each attempt at relief failed.

Learning to be thankful for small mercies, everybody was delighted when the aeroplanes that came over dropped them a few newspapers, medicines in tabloid form, spare parts and necessaries for guns and machinery, letters from home, occasionally money, and later on food; for in the last few weeks a regular aerial traffic in supplies was instituted: a daily procession of aeroplanes brought flour, dropping sacks containing two or three hundred

pounds at a time from a height of five or six thousand feet. The bags would naturally burst when they reached the earth from this great height, but three or four sacks were used, one inside the other, so that the precious food in the inner sack should not be lost.

One of our pilots made a great sensation one day in the Turkish camp when he looped the loop and cart-wheeled over Kût, in contempt of their "Archibalds." Prisoners subsequently told us that this derisive little bit of bravado greatly impressed the Turkish troops.

In February the heavy rains and the floods added to the discomfort of our men. The greater part of the twenty-five miles of trenches were repeatedly flooded. It was very cold at night, and the men had no change of clothes or opportunities for drying what they had; and as there was only wet mud to lie in, there were numerous cases of pneumonia, and even some of frostbite. The character of the siege, however, was changed by the later floods, when the river rose and overflowed its banks. It caused the British troops to abandon the front line of trenches, but the floods also completely washed out the Turks from the whole of their investing lines on the northern side, compelling them to retire for a thousand yards and placing an expanse of water between them and the British lines. The enemy, therefore, could now no longer worry our forces by rifle fire and grenades, trench mortars and mines, but had to confine themselves to artillery bombardment.

These same floods, however, considerably hampered the British relief expeditions. It is possible that the Turks themselves occasionally broke down the banks of the rivers, just as the Germans did in France, to impede the advance of our troops; but the banks of the Mesopotamian rivers have been so badly neglected by the Turks that enormous floods were bound to be of frequent occurrence without any untoward assistance.

The stocks of food grew less and less, but a large quantity of grain was discovered in February hidden in some of the Arab houses—a veritable godsend to hungry men. By the end of February the troops had eaten all the magnificent bullocks belonging to the heavy batteries; the camels also had been devoured, and a cheery officer solemnly informs us that the hump under certain circumstances is quite a delicacy. It has the appearance and flavour of substantial salt beef.

There were over four thousand horses and mules in Kût at the beginning of the siege, and it was obvious that the garrison could only afford to find food for those animals which in their turn would be required to feed the garrison. In this respect the mules were more accommodating than the horses, for it was found possible to teach them to become cannibals. There was no grass in the place, the hay and straw ran out, so that palm leaves and the husks of grain formed the chief diet of the unfortunate animals.

Some millstones were dropped into Kût by the

aeroplanes, and a little flour-mill was ingeniously set up. As the weary weeks progressed the bread ration decreased and all luxuries, such as sugar, cheese, jam, butter, and tea, entirely disappeared. The monotony of the diet was very trying. Some of the men shot sparrows, starlings, doves, rooks, occasionally a seagull; and once a flight of locusts was welcomed with delight.

As the men became more and more hungry, they got weaker and weaker, so that they were scarcely able to carry their kit. The period of sentry duty was reduced to one hour each. Scurvy became very prevalent amongst the Indian troops, for no vegetables were available except the grasses and herbs which came up after rain in places where there had once been cultivation. The leaves of a small wild convolvulus clover were used as "spinach."

The last gallant attempt that was made to bring relief to the garrison, which so nearly met with success, must rank, in spite of its failure, as one of the finest and bravest episodes of the whole war. The large river steamship *Julnar*, dismantled of all unnecessary superstructure, was stacked up with over two hundred and seventy tons of provisions. It was manned by a volunteer crew under the direction of Commander C. Cowley, V.C., who knew the river remarkably well, as he had been an officer on board the river steamers for nearly thirty years. On the 24th of April he started to make a dash for Kût. The steamer passed through more

than twelve miles of the Turkish lines, although fired at by thousands of rifles and numerous guns, till at the last bend of the river, within sight and range of Kût, when almost every man on board the ship had been either killed or wounded, an unlucky shell burst upon the bridge. This wounded the last officer, and a Turko-German device caused the ship to run aground on the outside of the bend Treacherous Arab spies had informed the Turks of the loading up of the *Julnar*, so they had stretched a strong cable across the river, not at right angles to the banks, but slanting towards a point where they concentrated troops and artillery. The bow of the *Julnar*, instead of snapping the cable, was suddenly deflected and the ship dashed on the bank. It was a terrible disappointment to those who were watching her from the beleaguered town, when they noticed that the ship ceased to move, and during the whole of that anxious night they heard the battle raging round her. When daylight came, they could see the ill-fated vessel at the end of the reach, only a few miles away. It had failed in its effort to bring relief to them, but the attempt must be recorded as one of the most heroic deeds done in connection with the expeditions in Mesopotamia. The sad sequel to this touching story was the report that our brave Commander was apparently murdered by the ruthless Turks. After the return of our prisoners, we learned from their own lips that Commander Cowley, though wounded, had been captured alive,

that he was immediately separated from his companions and mysteriously disappeared.

The beleaguered garrison was now at the end of its resources, on account of floods and other natural obstacles which the relief forces had been unable to break through. It is remarkable that the chief resistance took place at Senna-i-yat, which General Townshend's forces had captured from the Turks with much fewer men some months before. This was confessedly the strongest position which the Turks had prepared in Mesopotamia, and it was undoubtedly a brilliant military achievement when General Townshend's small forces succeeded in routing the Turks from this strongly fortified position; and now it was Senna-i-yat that held up the relief forces.

Our beleaguered troops had the utmost confidence in their great General, and firmly believed that, if only he had departed from Kût in an aeroplane and taken command of the relief forces, he would certainly have broken the Turkish resistance again at Senna-i-yat and delivered the suffering garrison.

General Townshend's army was never actually defeated, but it was at length compelled to capitulate for the simple reason that there was absolutely nothing further to eat.

It is too readily assumed that General Townshend's rapid advance on Baghdad was a military blunder, which resulted in an unnecessary sacrifice of 15,000 men. To those of us who know something

of Mesopotamia and the situation which faced our authorities in the Eastern theatre of war, the dash towards Baghdad appeared to have been the most triumphant piece of strategy which we had been privileged to witness since the outbreak of war.

If only our reinforcements had succeeded in extricating General Townshend's troops, it would have been acknowledged that the achievements of his little force were remarkably serviceable to the Allied cause from many points of view. Even as it was, however, the garrison rendered excellent service to the cause, at a time when such help was most urgently needed.

In the first place, the stand which these troops made against the Turks at Kût successfully checked the Turkish advance towards Basra until sufficient reinforcements arrived in the country to preserve for Great Britain that enormous stretch of fertile land which had already been won by the famous Sixth Division in Mesopotamia. These plains of Mesopotamia were at once brought under cultivation, so that they were quickly able to produce sufficient food for the army, and in due course began to export a substantial amount of grain.

Secondly, the war revealed to us the tremendous importance of the step taken by Mr Lloyd George in June 1914, when he secured for the Admiralty the valuable oil-fields of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. There has been an ever-increasing demand for oil, and it was essential to the satisfactory prosecution of the war. The Rumanian and the

Russian supplies of oil were cut off, so that the demands from America became enormous; and there are scientific men in the United States who think America has reached the limit of her productive power in the matter of petroleum, and will soon need the whole of her resources for her own requirements. Her exports in 1916 were nearly 2500 million gallons. There are 3½ million automobiles in the United States, and the output is increasing at the rate of 25 per cent. every year. In Canada the number of motor cars increased from 62,000 in 1914 to more than 110,000 in 1916. The most important source of our future oil supply, therefore, is situated in Lower Mesopotamia; and if the British forces had been obliged to retreat from Kût to Basra, it might have been impossible to guard the far-distant oil-fields and the two hundred miles of pipe line, which was seriously broken up in some places by Turkish troops before we captured the town of Kût 'l Amara.

Thirdly, the detention of the Turkish forces at Kût gave time for the organisation of the necessary roads and railways in a roadless country, and without these it would have been difficult to hold any portion of Mesopotamia. Equally important was the respite it gave for the completion of the fleet of river gunboats that, under the command of Captain Nunn, so effectually co-operated with General Maude, and enabled him to make his successful advance to the city of Baghdad.

Fourthly, the siege of Kût prevented the Turkish

regular troops from joining the 12,000 Persian rebels under Prince Reuss. If only the Turks could have penetrated into Persia, they would have appeared on the Indian frontier with many thousands of rebel fanatics from Persia and Afghanistan. This would have necessitated our sending a large army to India at a time when not a man could be safely spared from the Western and Eastern fronts. Townshend's tenacity, however, kept the Turks in Mesopotamia, while Russian cavalry dispersed the Persian bands, and thus the Indian frontier was saved.

Fifthly, it is certain also that General Townshend's expedition facilitated the entry of the Russians into the great Turkish fortress of Erzeroom. A few weeks after the battle of Ctesiphon I was privileged to examine a broken kettle-drum which had been taken from the Turks and had been sent to England by one of Townshend's officers. The inscription on this kettle-drum, and the addresses on certain envelopes that were sent with it, confirmed my conviction that the Kurdish troops who ought to have been kept on guard against the Russians' advance in the north had likewise been hurried down to Baghdad to check the progress of our rash little army that was threatening the capital of Mesopotamia. It was not anticipated that the Russians would move forward in the depth of winter, and the Germans were mocking us in their newspapers by pointing out that the investment of our forces in Kût was a proof of the im-

possibility of the Allies being able to help each other, since the Russians could not come to save us. In point of fact, however, it turned out to be exactly the opposite to what the Germans supposed, for we were able, by a successful operation, to help our Russian allies; and whilst our enemies were attracted to Kût, the Russians, behind the backs of the Kurds, commenced to scale the snow-clad mountains of Armenia, and eventually sprang a surprise upon the depleted forces of the best natural stronghold of Asiatic Turkey.

In addition to all this, the expedition deflected the greater part of an enormous army that was preparing for a second attack upon Egypt, for Townshend's advance compelled the Turks to give up their expedition against Egypt in order to save Baghdad. The holding of this ancient capital of Mesopotamia was vital to the prestige of the Turks amongst the Arabs and Persians, hence their decision to postpone the capture of Cairo! It meant, however, that Townshend's army was suddenly confronted with enormous forces, which necessitated his retirement on Kût; but he had saved the Suez Canal and delivered our Empire from a serious menace to its most vital artery of communications.

There are two significant paragraphs in the report of the Mesopotamian Commission which reveal the influence upon the Kût Expedition exerted by one who became " the best known and most universally popular man of any race or creed in Mesopotamia."

In paragraph 1, page 20, we are told: "On 23rd November 1914, the day after Basra was occupied by General Barrett's forces, Sir Percy Cox, the Indian Government's Political Representative in Mesopotamia, telegraphed to the Viceroy: 'With General Officer Commanding, I have been studying topographical details bearing on an advance to Baghdad in case such an advance should be decided on,' and he proceeded to outline a reasoned proposal for an advance on Baghdad."

From this it appears that as early as November 1914 the proposal for an advance on Baghdad came originally from Sir Percy Cox, who had studied the situation with the General Officer Commanding. I have met officers from Mesopotamia who applaud Sir John Nixon's endorsement of this early proposal, and point out the wisdom of his surmise that the difficulty of fighting our way through a Turkish army entrenched above Kût might be more serious and costly than a rapid advance to Baghdad upon the heels of a Turkish army in flight. An advance on Baghdad a few months earlier might have given to General Townshend's army the most dramatic victory of the war.

The other paragraph (No. 7, on page 32) tells us that "the Kût disaster might have been averted for a long time if the Arab population, about 6000, had been expelled before the investment began. Sir Percy Cox was averse to such a measure, as he was unwilling to hand them over to the tender mercies of the Turks and hostile Arabs, but their

retention undoubtedly added to the difficulties of supply."

This humane consideration for the Arabs has evidently not been in vain, for the one man mentioned, in terms of affection and regard, by practically all the inhabitants as a suitable administrator for Mesôpotamia was Sir Percy Cox, the wise, the just, the beloved " Cokkos."

The fortitude of General Townshend's brave troops has now been amply rewarded, for the fall of Baghdad shattered Turkish prestige; and the glorious results that succeeded the unfortunate sacrifice of our brave army might have been impossible but for the long detention of the Turkish forces at the siege of Kût 'l Amara.

A few other facts connected with this remarkable story are worth remembering. General Townshend's army was at that time the largest British force which had ever surrendered to our enemies, and the nation to which it surrendered was the most disreputable of all our foes. Without the aid of the Germans and the facilities of the Baghdad Railway, the Turks would have been unable to resist even Townshend's little army at a distance so remote from their capital and base of supplies.

Another interesting fact is that the General who surrendered to the Turks was the very man to whom the Turks made a full, complete, and unconditional surrender. From the island of Principo he tried three times to make his escape, and then, at great risk to his personal safety, he did his utmost

to bring about the downfall of Enver Pasha's government. On the fall of Enver Pasha the new ministers sent for him to help them. His conditions were that he must be a free man at once, and that the Turks must immediately open the Dardanelles. Half an hour afterwards he left the Sublime Porte with a document in his pocket securing the opening of the Dardanelles, the closing of the Bosphorus to the Black Sea fleet, and the immediate release of all our prisoners of war.

The report of the Mesopotamian Commission revealed the awful conditions under which our brave men fought and suffered in the first critical months of that strenuous campaign. The army that was never defeated was ordered to advance on Baghdad in spite of Townshend's protests. In a desperate battle he routed the Turkish army at Ctesiphon; then, weary as they were, his well-disciplined veterans retreated ninety miles with the reinforced Turks at their heels. Not a single man nor a single gun was lost, neither was a single wounded soldier left behind; and in that wonderful retreat over a waterless desert these war-worn heroes turned round and wiped out the Turkish advance guard of 10,000 men.

Townshend might have fought his way out of Kût with smaller losses than the surrender entailed, for he wired to the Commander-in-Chief: "I must be relieved in a month. If not, I won't stay here."

The Commander-in-Chief guaranteed to relieve him in a month, but unfortunately failed; so Townshend stayed at Kût and thereby saved the whole of Mesopotamia.

Townshend's last message from his chief was an order to surrender, when he received a wireless: "I cannot relieve you; make the best terms you can."

The remnant of his "contemptible" little army—the heroes of Shaiba, Basra, Kût, and Ctesiphon—reached home without a welcome or a cheer. They were broken in body by three long years of Turkish tyranny, and they may well be broken in heart at the amazing fact that the "gentle Turk" to-day receives more honour and praise from British lips than our valorous sons who saved us from a Turkish triumph.

Soon after the signing of the Armistice, I passed through the great Baghcha Tunnel on the Baghdad Railway, where our men were forced to labour under terrible conditions of hardship and cruelty. I secured a photograph of the cemetery where so many of our men are buried; and the following poem, which was written by one of the prisoners at Kustamuni, appeared in *The Near East* on 27th December 1918.

THE ROADMAKERS

A Song of the Dead Men of Kût

The Jews they toiled for Pharaoh,
  And groaned beneath his rod,
For Pharaoh's hand was heavy—
  Till the people called on God;
And God showed signs and wonders
  To set His chosen free,
And broke the rod of Pharaoh,
And smote the land of Pharaoh,
And slew with plagues his first-born,
  His armies with the sea.

Five to our one, you fled from us on many a stricken field;
We fought you all the sweltering seasons through;
And when you hemmed us in at last and we were forced to yield,
We struck our flag to Hunger, not to you.
You lied to us with courteous speech, and we believed you then,
To learn too soon your honour's little worth.
To-day but few are left alive to tell the tale to men,
But our blood cries out against you from the earth.

Famished and spent, across the waste, beast-like you drove us on,
And clubbed to death the stragglers by the way;
Our sick men in the lazar huts you left to die alone,
And you robbed the very dying as they lay.
Naked and starved we built your roads and tunnelled through your hills,
And you flogged us when we fainted at our work.
Fevered beneath the sun we toiled, racked with the winter chills,
Till death released us, kindlier than the Turk.

The wastes wherethrough you herded us, the barren ways we came,
When the weak fell out to die beside the track,
The remnants of your armies shall be hunted through the same,
With the swords of our avengers at their back.
Your dole of bread shall fail you then, and thirst shall thin your ranks;
You shall faint beneath the burden of the suns,
And the carrion-scented Arabs shall be hovering on your flanks
To snatch the dwindling salvage of our guns.

The kin of us you murdered shall be masters of your lands,
They shall batter down the bulwarks of your trust;
The city of your sultans shall be wrested from your hands,
Your glory shall be trampled in the dust.
And the tunnels that we drove for you, the roads that we have made,
Shall be highways for the armies of your foe;
We shall mock you from our graves, that in what we did as slaves
We helped, we too, to work your overthrow.

Heartbroken and forsaken,
Our Calvary we trod,
Yet with our faith unshaken
We turned from you to God;
And God has greatly taught us
To count our losses gain,
Since we who fought for England,
Here, too, took thought for England,
In bondage wrought for England,
And have not died in vain.

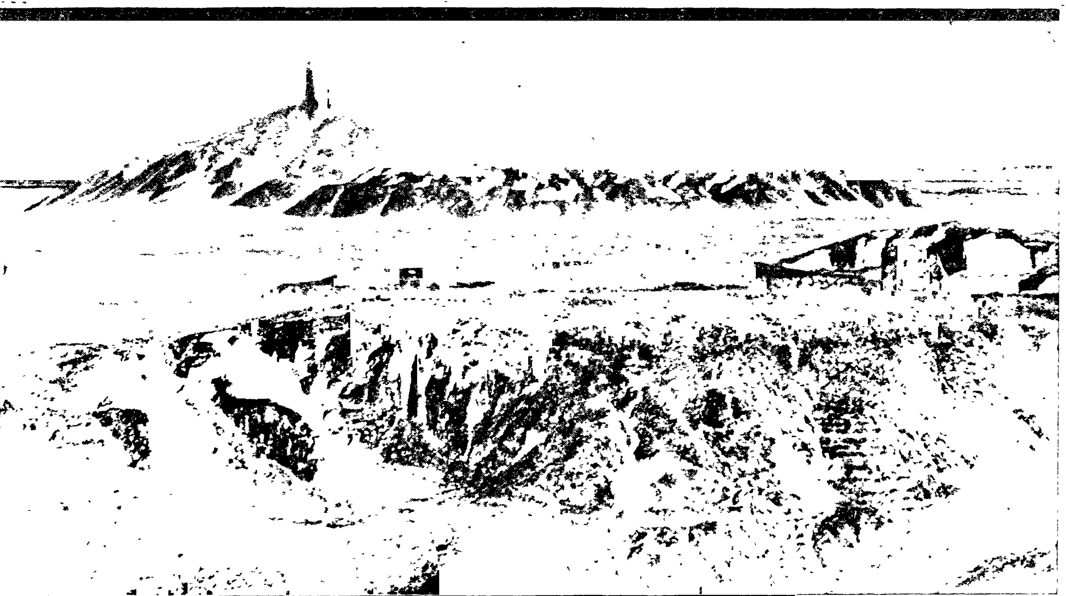
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CHAPTER VIII

THE ANCIENT MONUMENTS OF MESOPOTAMIA

One of the most interesting and most valuable features of Mesopotamia is its abundance of archæological treasures. The whole surface of the country is thickly covered with ruined temples, towers, and palaces, with extensive mounds and hidden cities of great antiquity, with innumerable smaller ruins of genuine historical value, with traces of great canals and reservoirs, with fragments of statuary and works of art that should make these lands of special educational value to the whole civilised world.

Egypt was brought from bankruptcy to prosperity quite as much on account of its attractions for tourists as by reason of its commercial enterprises. In like manner, most of the wealth of modern Palestine has been acquired from its visitors and pilgrims, who gathered from the ends of the earth to get a brief glimpse of its sacred sites. There is every prospect now that Mesopotamia will become more popular even than Egypt, for it is being made accessible to the Western world, and already it



Birs Nimrood at Borsippa, near the ruins of Babylon, erroneously called "The Tower of Babel."
(See page 145.)

is safer than heretofore for the pilgrims from the East. Egypt is too much westernised to be any longer the ideal rendezvous for East and West; but the tourist who wishes to touch the fringe of the East should go henceforth to the bazaars of Mesopotamia, visit the Bedouin at Babylon, see the Kurds in their precipitous mountains, the Yezidees, the Eastern Christians, and the Sabeans in their native haunts; watch the boatmen of the Tigris, the Arab merchants of Basra, or the pilgrims that come from Persia and Samarkand. In a land that teems with historical treasures, the traveller can see so many different phases of Eastern life, so many features of the present as well as the past, that he cannot fail to be thrilled by what cannot be witnessed in any other part of the globe.

Many ancient monuments have been carried off to the museums of Europe and America, but there is work enough in the country to occupy the attention of archæologists for at least another century. The ancient sites will no doubt henceforth be most carefully guarded, and a museum at Baghdad could easily be made as interesting as the famous museum at Cairo. It would be possible also to procure models and plaster casts of the more famous antiquities already removed, and a restoration of some notable specimens of Assyrian art and architecture would make Babylon and Nineveh more attractive to visitors than the ruins and relics of ancient Rome.

It is reasonable to assume that the Baghdad

Railway will be completed, and suitable carriage roads made to all the most interesting places, within the next few years. We shall then be able to reach Constantinople by the Orient Express, and arrive at the banks of the Euphrates from London in five or six days.

Jerablus is the station for the extensive ruins of CARCHEMISH, once the chief city of the Hittites, the masters of Syria from 1100 to 850 B.C. The ruins of an important Roman city named Europus overlap the remains of two distinct Hittite cities.

Here, on the threshold of Mesopotamia, we make our first acquaintance with Babylonia. The Hittite art, beautifully depicted upon the magnificent monuments exposed to view by British archæologists, was borrowed from Babylon, and the great goddess of Carchemish was the Babylonian Ishtar. Some of the well-preserved Hittite figures are depicted with belts and sashes of exactly the same shape and style as those worn to-day by the gentry of Baghdad, and the interior of a Hittite shrine bears a remarkable resemblance to the ordering of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem. Carchemish alone is worth all the trouble of a journey from London, though it offers but a foretaste of the pleasures that await a visitor to Babylonia. We cross the great "Flood" by the magnificent bridge of ten spans, and proceed on the Baghdad Railway to Nisibin, Ras 'l Ain, and Mosul.

NISIBIN is famous in ecclesiastical history, and for two centuries was a frontier fortress of Roman

civilisation, until Jovian built Dara about 16 miles away, where the ruins that can be seen of this Roman outpost cover a very considerable area. Nisibin is well situated on the edge of the plain, at the foot of the mountains. It was a paradise till the days of Selim the Grim, and an important centre of trade, as it formed a junction for most of the main roads from Europe to Asia. There are 300 springs at Ras 'l Ain, and the source of the Khabur river. A fortified city was built here by Theodosius in A.D. 380, but its ruins and those of Nisibin are not the only interesting places on the way to Nineveh, for the whole country from the Euphrates to the Khabur is full of mounds, ruins, and historical sites that are as yet hardly accessible to the average European traveller.

The ruins of NINEVEH are situated on the eastern bank of the Tigris, opposite the modern town of Mosul. The two mounds of KUYUNJIK and NEBY YUNIS represent the original city, which was surrounded by a wall to a depth of two miles from the river and four miles in length on its outer boundary. The Mosul bridge was largely constructed of stones extracted from the remains of these ancient walls. One of the most important discoveries at Kuyunjik was the library of Asshur-banipal. With amazing patience the tablets were deciphered by George Smith, who revealed to the world the Chaldean stories of the Creation, the Fall, and the Flood. There is also an account of Sargon's expedition against Ashdod (Isa. xx. 1), and a fine slab with

pictures and inscriptions recording Sennacherib's review of the spoils of Lachish (2 Kings xviii., etc.). The Kuyunjik mound contains the remains of two enormous palaces, one belonging to Sennacherib, whose will was found amongst the many clay documents, and the other palace belonging to his grandson Asshur-banipal (668–626 B.C.).

There are many voluminous records of the enormous number of marble sculptures, bas-reliefs, cylinders, and other treasures unearthed by archæologists at Kuyunjik; but the greater part of Nineveh remains to be uncovered, and many interesting days could be spent at these extensive mounds.

On the Neby Yunis mound there stand a large mosque and a Moslem village; consequently permission was never granted to excavate this sacred eminence. One summer, however, Sir Henry Layard made friends with the owner of a large house and persuaded him to excavate a cool room below the courtyard, in which Layard might sleep during the heat of the day. He paid the man handsomely for the hire of the room, and acquired all the antiquities that were brought to light by the excavation. In 1850 the Turkish governor of Mosul discovered at Neby Yunis two large winged bulls and an important marble slab. The slab disappeared from the Constantinople Museum in 1874, and was rediscovered some years later in the British Isles.

The mounds of NIMROOD, situated a few miles south of Kuyunjik, are still more extensive, and revealed some of the choicest Assyrian monuments

found in Mesopotamia, such as the black marble obelisk, 7 feet high, of Shalmaneser II. (860–825 B.C.), on which is recorded the king's reception of tribute from Jehu the son of Omri (1 Kings xix. 16 and 2 Kings ix. 10). From this Biblical city of CALAH a magnificent marble bull and a winged lion, with some beautiful bas-reliefs, were sent by Layard to London, while large numbers of exquisite sculptures were reburied in the mounds. Some of the monuments of marble, glass, and alabaster bear the names of Sargon II. (722–705 B.C.), Asshur-nasirapal (885–860 B.C.), Shalmaneser II., and Ezarhaddon (681–668 B.C.) (2 Kings xix. 27).

KHORSABAD is another ruined city as wonderful as Nimrood. It is situated 14 miles north-east of Mosul, on the left bank of the river Khorsar, which flows through Nineveh into the Tigris. It contains the ruined city of Dur-Sharrukeen or Sargon's Castle, founded by Sargon II., the father of Sennacherib, about 720 B.C., in which some beautiful wall decorations in blue and white enamelled tiles, sculptured halls, and very fine gates were discovered by the French excavators. An inscribed box which served as a corner-stone contained seven tablets in gold, silver, copper, lead, lapis lazuli, magnesite, and limestone, with the history of the buildings inscribed in identical cuneiform characters upon each one of them. This ruined city of Khorsabad covers over 721 acres, and its discovery by Botta in 1843 aroused the people of Europe to the importance of thoroughly excavating the mounds of Mesopotamia.

BALÂWAT is another ancient site, 15 miles east of Mosul, which has never been properly excavated, because it is being used as a burial-ground. Rassam, however, recovered some beautiful bronze panels which once covered the cedar gates of a large palace erected by Shalmaneser II.

The BAVIAN monuments and the rock sculptures of Gunduk, though less accessible, are worth visiting. The picture rocks of Bavian represent King Sennacherib making an offering to the goddess Ishtar; the inscription records the destruction of Babylon, which had rebelled against him and which he rased to the ground. There is one huge square panel with four gigantic figures, and a dozen smaller panels higher up on the rocks. Bavian is situated near the banks of the Gomel, 5 miles from Ain Sufni. Here were the principal quarries for Nineveh, where the monuments were first sculptured, then cut away from the rock, lowered to the river-side on rollers, and floated down the river on rafts of inflated sheepskins. The caves behind the panels were evidently used by hermits a thousand years after the fall of Nineveh.

To the west of Mosul there are ancient ruins all along the road to the Yezidee stronghold of JEBEL SINJAR, a most interesting place to visit when a motor road is made.

The river Tharthar flows from Sinjar to the best-preserved ruins I have seen in Mesopotamia. HATRA is a well-built circular city lying in the midst of extensive pasture lands, far removed from

the well-frequented roads. It has been called the "Home of Architecture," for it supplied the Sassanians with builders, architects, and models for the sumptuous palaces that displayed their opulence and power. Hatra needs little excavating, for, unlike the older Assyrian remains, it is not covered with debris, and it looks like a glorious city that has recently been ruined by an earthquake. Numerous towers adorn the fine stone walls; a magnificent palace stands erect in the midst of the city, which is solidly constructed of square stones, and many of the buildings are elaborately sculptured with figures and ornaments. It was probably founded about the first century of the Christian era, and was unsuccessfully besieged by both Trajan and Severus. The waters of the Tharthar are unpleasantly brackish, but the cultured Arabs of Hatra must have had some better water supply, for I was particularly attracted by the remarkably deep wells, beautifully built, broadening out at the base, and now, of course, half filled with debris. Hatra is not a place for ancient archæological treasures, but it may become a popular resort for tourists; and the fascinating encampments of the Shammar and other genuine Arab tribes are better seen on the way to Hatra than in any other part of Mesopotamia.

The nearest Assyrian ruin to Hatra is found at KALAH SHARGHAT, on the west bank of the Tigris, where the excavations have brought to light ASSHUR, the mother of cities, the oldest capital of Assyria.

The main line of the Baghdad Railway from Mosul will pass through or near a number of interesting villages containing Assyrian remains, until it reaches the battlefield of GAUGAMELA, where Alexander the Great, on the 1st of October 331 B.C., routed the armies of Darius and thereby obtained the dominion of all Asia. The modern Erbil or ARBELA, 20 miles away, is situated on and around a large artificial mound about 150 feet high. This has never been excavated, as the Turks would brook no disturbance of their dignity and power, exemplified by the dirty castle that crowns the summit of the mound.

The furious torrent of the Lower Zab is crossed at Alton Kupri, called the Golden Bridge, from the annual value of the toll collected by the Turks from all unfortunate travellers. The tourist of the future will forgo the pleasure of climbing the steep stone structure of the Ottomans, and over an ordinary British railway bridge will pass on to KERKUK, where the most interesting sight can only be seen with a candle or torch.

Just outside this Kurdish town of Kerkuk are a large hill and a small Christian cemetery. The sexton will guide a visitor through a small door, and, to his amazement, he will be able to wander through a labyrinth of catacombs, cells, and early Christian churches, where the Christians hid themselves from the fury of the villainous Tamerlane.

The ancient NAHRWAN CANAL is crossed on the way to Baghdad, and on the banks of the Tigris are

the two important towns of TIKRIT and SAMARRA. The former contains some ancient ruins, and was especially notable as the see of a Christian bishop; but the latter is of great historical interest, in addition to its sanctity as an important Moslem shrine. A great spiral tower is to be seen amongst the ruins of Eski Baghdad, for the son of Haroun 'l Raschid made Samarra his capital. A recent surveyor, Colonel Beazeley, R.E., declares that the ruins of an elaborate irrigation system have been revealed, and that the ancient city was 20 miles in length, 2½ miles in width, and probably contained as many as four million people.

The remains of the once powerful Babylonian city of OPIS, associated with the campaigns of Alexander the Great and Xenophon, are hidden beneath the enormous Tel Manjur mounds in a great bend of the Tigris, half way between Baghdad and Samarra. The river formerly flowed to the west of Opis, which accounts for the tradition that places the city on the left bank of the Tigris.

The great Nahrwan Canal can be traced from the Tigris north of Samarra to the Diala, and thence to the Tigris again at Kût 'l Amara. The greatest canal of Babylonia was the Shat 'l Nil, which ran from the north of Babylon through Niffer to the Shat 'l Hai near Nasiriyeh. It is identified with the "river Chebar in the land of the Chaldeans," that for many centuries brought life and fertility to the plains of Lower Mesopotamia.

The "City of the Khalifs" is one of the most

interesting of Eastern cities, but it contains very few monuments of archæological interest. There are many mounds around Baghdad, and traces of the city and palaces of Haroun 'l Raschid. Some of the older houses on the western side were built almost entirely of Nebuchadnezzar's bricks, evidently brought from Babylon. Whilst I was resident in the city a large earthenware jar, full of gold cufic coins, was dislodged by the oar of a boatman on the western bank of the Tigris.

Near the Christian quarter there is a neglected ancient minaret erected in 1235 by the Khalif Mustansir, whose ruined college on the banks of the Tigris was transformed into the disorderly Turkish Custom House. On the western outskirts of the city is the tomb of Sitt-Zobeida, the wife of Haroun 'l Raschid, and near by the well-preserved tomb of Sheikh Maaruf 'l Kerkhi, dating from A.D. 1215.

Eighteen miles south of Baghdad is the stately arch of CTESIPHON, the remains of the reception hall of the palace of Chosroes II. (A.D. 591–628), who was the last and the most remarkable monarch of the Persian Sassanian dynasty. The arch is 120 feet high, 164 feet long, and 82 feet wide; thousands of British troops were able to take shelter under its shadow from the heat of the sun when our forces were operating towards Baghdad.

AKER KOOF is the most curious of all the ruins in the country. It is situated about 18 miles west of Baghdad, near the ancient highroad to Felujah, and was mistaken for the Tower of Babel

by English travellers in Elizabethan times. It was built by King Kurigalzu, who reigned in Babylonia about the time that Moses was leading the Children of Israel out of Egypt, and it represents the remains of a stage tower erected probably for the combined purpose of religious devotion and astronomical observation. The kernel of the original tower is a little over 100 feet high, and consists of sun-dried bricks with layers of reed matting about 3 feet apart placed between every fifth or seventh layer of bricks. The well-made kiln-burnt bricks that formed the outer covering have disappeared, and fragments only are to be found at the foot of the tower. The ancient inhabitants of Mesopotamia were far more cultured than the modern Arabs and Turks. They were evidently well skilled in the observation of the starry heavens, for polished lenses have been discovered, and inscriptions that indicate their acquaintance with the four moons of Jupiter. They named the twelve signs of the Zodiac, divided the equatorial into 360 degrees, with further divisions of 60 minutes and 60 seconds, and they gave us the system of dividing the days as marked on our present-day watches.

Near Felujah, at the Euphrates end of the great Isa Canal, which ran through the Aker Koof depression to the Tigris, there are the immense mounds of SIFAIRA and AMBAR, flourishing cities, no doubt, when Felujah was for centuries the "Charing Cross" of the world's highways.

North-west of Sifaira, on the banks of the

Euphrates, and due east of Damascus, is the well-known town of HÎT, the Is, the Ahava, and the Ihi-da-Kira of earlier days, whence came the asphalt and the great paving-stones for Nebuchadnezzar's processional road at Babylon. The quarries further north, at Anah, also produce a fine hard limestone exactly similar to the immense inscribed flags of Babel Street. There are some interesting ruins on the way to Deir-Zor, at JABRIYEH, SÂLIHIYEH, and especially at RÂHABAH; while north of Deir are Zenobia's ruins on the way to SABKHA, where British Mesopotamia touches the Shereefian boundary.

South of Felujah the modern tourists' road to Babylon will certainly pass near the interesting mounds of ABU HABBA, situated about four miles from the Euphrates and the same distance north of Mahmoudiyeh. They were discovered in 1881 by Rassam, and found to contain the ruins of SIPPARA (850 B.C.). In addition to 60,000 tablets, Rassam brought to light the famous temple of Shamash (the sun-god), and two large barrel cylinders of Nabonidos which proved to be of the utmost historical importance. Nabonidos was a Babylonian archæologist to whom historians are indebted for much chronological data. On these barrel cylinders he tells us that before he rebuilt the temple of Shamash his workmen were digging out the foundations of the earlier temple, and discovered the still older foundation stone of Naram-Sin, the son of Sargon I., "which for 3200 years

no previous king had ever seen." It was these cylinders that conveyed to us the startling information that Naram-Sin reigned in Babylon about 3750 B.C. These extensive ruins have proved to be an inexhaustible mine for illicit Arab excavators, and they are the only mounds in Babylonia that were investigated by the Turks. In 1894 a small sum of money was provided by the Sultan Abd'l Hamid, and the work continued for two months under Bedry Bey, assisted by the French Assyriologist, Father Sheil.

In the neighbourhood of Mahmoudiyeh there are numerous Babylonian mounds; nearer to Babylon are the enormous ruins of TEL-IBRAHIM; extensive ruins also at EL KARAINA, 4 miles north of Babil; groups of mounds also at DILHIM, 10 miles south of Hillah; and a great red pyramid mound at EL OHAIMIR, 8 miles east of the Euphrates, found to contain the ruins of ancient Kish, which flourished in the days of Hammurabi.

BABYLON is the gem of all the ancient monuments in Mesopotamia. It is impossible to describe in a few words the results of half a century's excavations and research. The many bulky volumes that have been published for the edification of specialists may some day be condensed into a portable guide for the information of ordinary travellers and tourists. Five miles north of Hillah, the ruins of Babylon begin with the great mound of BABIL, known to the Arabs as Mujellibeh, the site of a fortress and one of Nebuchadnezzar's palaces. A

mile to the south is another set of smaller mounds called El-Kasr, where are the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's chief palace and the great processional road which leads to the Ishtar gate of Marduk's temple. The throne room of the palace measures 170 feet by 60 feet, and the walls of the road to the temple were exquisitely adorned with enamelled tiles. At the excavated palace the traveller may now survey the very room in which Alexander the Great died. Possibly here also, or, as some suppose, at Tel-Amran, were the so-called "Hanging Gardens," that ranked amongst the seven wonders of the world, chiefly because they were laid out upon the roofs of an occupied building. At different stages in the great palace the vaulted roofs apparently supported an unusually deep layer of earth, in which the trees were planted. The air which passed through the well-watered vegetation no doubt became delightfully cool, and possibly the palace officials transacted their business in the cool chambers during the heat of the summer.

It is a summer custom in Baghdad to hang a wide-meshed trellis-work stuffed with camel thorn over the doors and windows of all offices and living-rooms. This is constantly sprinkled with water, and the hot, dry wind which blows through the camel thorn causes rapid evaporation and appreciably cools the rooms, already somewhat darkened by the trellis-work, so that they are doubly protected from the intense glare and heat of a summer day in Mesopotamia.

South of the Kasr is TEL-AMRAN, containing the temple of Esagila. Close by Amran there lies the rectangular ruin of E-TEMEN-AN-KI, the remains of a great ziggurat, believed to be the most probable site of the "Tower of Babel." Nabopolasar lays stress upon the height of this tower, which he restored and made "its foundations lie firm on the bosom of the underworld, while its top stretched heavenward." Nebuchadnezzar also records his attempt to "raise up the top of E-temen-an-ki that it may rival heaven." Alexander the Great laid it in ruins. Extensive remains of the city walls can be traced from the Shat 'l Nil near Babil in the north to the village of Jumjumah (Golgotha) in the south.

Nine miles south of Hillah are the imposing ruins of BIRS NIMROOD, for a long time erroneously identified with the "Tower of Babel." It was built by Nebuchadnezzar as the temple of the Seven Spheres of Heaven and Earth, in the midst of the city of Borsippa, and the ruined wall on the top of the mound rises to a height of 153 feet from the level of the plain. The temple was dedicated to the god Nebo, "the Guardian of Heaven and Earth," and its seven stages were differently coloured. The lowest stage was black and covered with bitumen, representing Saturn.

The	2nd	stage was	orange	representing	Jupiter.
,,	3rd	,,	red	,,	Mars.
,,	4th	,,	golden	,,	the Sun.
,,	5th	,,	whitish yellow	,,	Venus.
,,	6th	,,	blue	,,	Mercury.
,,	7th	,,	silver-plated	,,	the Moon.

The sixth stage was artificially vitrified to obtain a blue tint, and the imperishable dark blue slag used so near the summit has helped to preserve this magnificent building for so many centuries.

Almost as important as Babylon are the great mounds of NIFFER (the Calneh of Gen. x. 10), which lie on the edge of the Affej marshes, and have been so admirably excavated in recent years by the University of Pennsylvania. Layard thought nothing was to be found here, but fifty years later Professor Hilprecht reported that more than 60,000 cuneiform tablets had been excavated, a temple with its library had been located, and a large pre-Sargon gate had been discovered below the level of the desert.

Mesopotamia has two distinct divisions. The southern portion, below the Median Wall, was known as Sumir, or the land of Shinar, and the northern portion was known as Accad. The traveller in the land of Shinar will meet with masses of extensive ruins on every hand. The smaller mounds are too numerous to mention.

The largest set of ruins in the land of Shinar are to be found about 60 miles from Suk-esh-Shuyukh; they belong to the period of 2700 B.C., and represent the relics of WARKA, the Biblical Erech (Gen. x. 10). A large number of most interesting coffins were excavated from these mounds. It was found that they very quickly crumbled to fragments whilst being exhumed, until a method was adopted of pasting the coffins

over with paper as soon as they were brought to light. They were then extracted whole and sent intact to the museums of Europe. At SENKERE, not far from Warka, are two mounds which measure four miles in circumference, containing the remains of a temple and a stage tower of the Sun-god. Many of the tablets discovered here were wrapped in thin clay envelopes; some triangular ones have holes at their corners, as if they had been used as labels and secured to some object. One of the tablets exhibits two men boxing 4000 years ago. These mounds contain the ruins of Larsam, the Ellasar of Gen. xiv. 1, one of the earliest and most famous of Babylonian cities.

TELLO has been called the Pompeii of Babylonian antiquity. It is situated eight miles north-east of Shatra and three miles south of the Shat 'l Hai. It is remarkable for the fine collection of dolerite sculptures excavated there, for the transformation of a Babylonian sanctuary into a Parthian palace, for the number of monuments discovered which are older than 3750 B.C., and for the 30,000 baked cuneiform tablets found in layers on shelves, representing the archives of a temple. One of the Tello tablets described a certain King Dungi as the "King of Ur, King of the four quarters of the world." A Mesopotamian flood might well have been described by such a king or his historian as covering the four quarters of the world.

The mound of MUGHEIR, which can be found seven miles south-west of Nasiriyeh, covers the

remains of Ur of the Chaldees (Gen. xi. 28 and xv. 7). The ruins are estimated to belong to the period of about 2700 B.C. The name of Belshazzar, King of Babylon, was found upon one of the excavated inscriptions.

Some particularly interesting records have been unearthed at ABU SHAHRAIN, better known as the ERIDU (the Blessed City) of ancient history. The foundations of a temple dedicated to Ea, father of Merodach, were found here by Mr W. Taylor in 1850. It is stated to have been a seaport 7000 years ago, and the mounds represent the site of the most ancient city in Chaldea. The ruins were investigated during the war by Captain Thompson, with highly important results. Neolithic remains have been discovered, and the primitive buff pottery of wheel-turned clay is said to resemble the pottery found in the last stratum of the ruins of Susa. This seems to indicate that the two cities were peopled by men of the same character in prehistoric times, and subsequent investigation may lead to more definite opinions about the probable site of the Garden of Eden.

Under the auspices of the British Museum, systematic excavations were continued at ERIDU and UR in 1919 with encouraging results. The great outer wall of a temple (2400 B.C.) was uncovered at Ur. It is 38 feet thick, and contains chambers in the thickness of the wall.

Another prehistoric site was also discovered by the same excavator, Mr Hall, at TEL-OBEID,

about four miles west of Ur, where some of the earliest relics of the Sumerian age (3000 B.C.) have been brought to light, and life-size heads of lions made of copper, with eyes, tongues, and teeth of red, white, and black stone; clay pillars with tesselated designs in triangles and squares of red and black stone and mother-of-pearl set in bitumen.

The British people have had more to do with excavating the ancient monuments in Mesopotamia than any other nation, but they were ably supported by the French, and in more recent years the Germans and the Americans have done remarkable work by excavating the mounds in a thoroughly scientific way.

The East India Company initiated the interest of the British public in the ruins of Babylon, and ordered their Resident at Basra to send specimens of the bricks to London.

The first real explorer of Babylon and Nineveh was Claudius J. Rich, British Resident for the East India Company at Baghdad, who died of cholera at Shiraz in 1821. He was followed by such well-known men as Ker Porter, Fraser, Chesney, Rawlinson, Layard, George Smith, Rassam, and King. The French began operations at Khorsabad under Botta in 1842, and at Tello under De Sarzec in 1877.

The German scholars only began in 1886 to work at Surghul and El-Hibba, not far from Tello; but under Koldewey in 1899 they started upon the ruins of Babylon, and in a thoroughly efficient

manner brought to light the greater part of the city of Nebuchadnezzar (604–561 B.C.).

In 1888 the Americans came to Niffer, where they courageously worked with remarkable success, though with occasional interruptions, until the outbreak of war.

The condition of Mesopotamia under the Turkish régime during the last half-century made the work of these scientific men extremely difficult and dangerous. I had the privilege of visiting most of the excavations, and realised how great were the trials and disappointments as well as the triumphs of those whose self-denying labours have so greatly enriched our knowledge of the past. When Botta was excavating at Khorsabad he brought a number of beams at considerable expense, and used them as supports for the walls of the excavated buildings. The villagers, with an ingrained love of pilfering, pillaged the wood, and the ancient buildings were destroyed. The Turkish governor believed Botta was searching for gold, so set watchmen to seize it, and threw Botta's workmen into prison when it was not forthcoming. Annoyed at his failure to secure the anticipated gilded treasures, he closed down the excavations and reported to Constantinople that Botta was establishing a military stronghold for the purpose of taking the country by force of arms and proclaiming himself Sultan.

A large part of the antiquities at Khorsabad with sixty-eight cases of the finest bas-reliefs from

Asshur-banipal's palace at Kuyunjik, were lost by the sinking of two rafts in the Tigris. Also all the collections excavated and purchased by Oppert at Babylon, including a valuable marble vase of Naram-Sin (3750 B.C.), were sunk in the Tigris not far from Kurna, while on their way to Basra.

The American excavators had serious trouble at Niffer. On one occasion the Arabs set fire to the encampment, half the horses were burnt to death, and 1000 dollars fell into the hands of the plunderers. The excavations were abandoned for a time, though the workers were fortunately able to save all their antiquities.

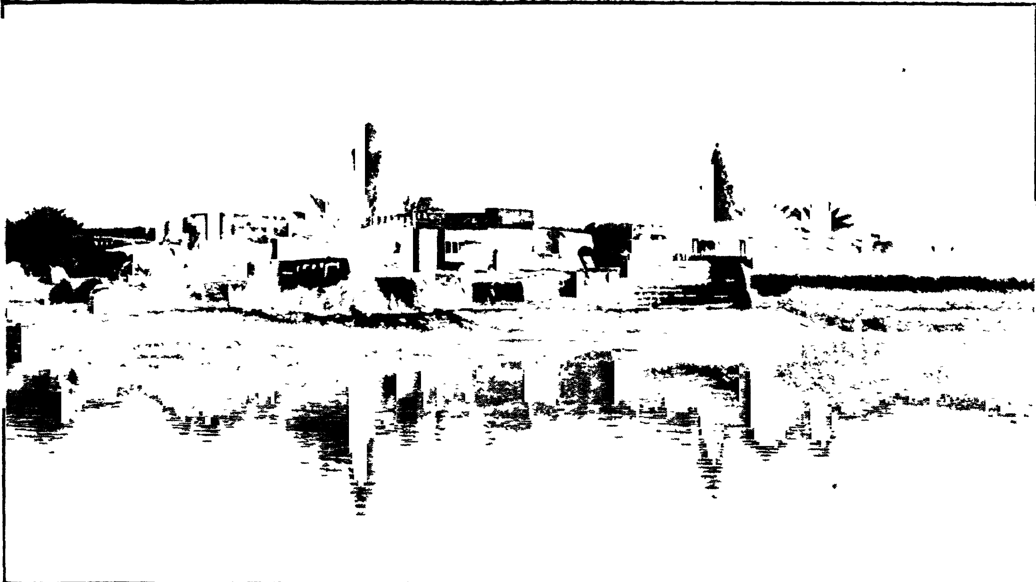
This superficial survey of the ruined monuments of antiquity to be found in Mesopotamia will suffice to show that the country is replete with treasures of peculiar interest and unique value to travellers and tourists as well as to archæologists and historians.

CHAPTER IX

THE SACRED SHRINES AND RELIGIOUS SECTS

I HAVE heard it stated that in Mesopotamia there are more sects, more gates to heaven, and more roads to hell than in the United States of America. Every Moslem "Mathhab" is represented here, every variety of Jewish belief, more than a dozen different Christian sects; and besides the Sufis and Babis from Persia, there are the Sabeans and Yezidees, in whose religious opinions one finds Judaism, Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Gnosticism, Star-worship, and Ornithomancy all jumbled together in glorious confusion. A pilgrimage to any of the sacred shrines is a sure passport to Paradise; none know the nether world better than the Yezidees, and the Sabean theology abounds with hells and innumerable demonic rulers.

The Hebrew race derived its origin from Mesopotamia when Abraham crossed the Euphrates and settled in the land of Canaan. There are probably nearly 80,000 Arabic-speaking Jews living to-day in the towns and villages of the land that is of special interest to the Jewish race, not only because it is



The town of Kefil and the traditional tomb of Ezekiel, situated on an inlet of the Hindiah Canal, not far from Birs Nimrood. (See page 153)

their Patriarch's native land, but also on account of the long years which the Hebrews spent in this country during the Babylonian captivity. There are three sacred places constantly visited by Jewish pilgrims. The most important is Ezra's Tomb, with its picturesque turquoise dome, situated on the banks of the Tigris not far from the "Garden of Eden." The Talmud records a legend that Ezra was on his way from Jerusalem to the Persian capital in order to secure a further release of Hebrew captives when he died at Zamzuma, a town on the Tigris, where every Jewish pilgrim devoutly believes he was buried, and not in Jerusalem, as suggested by Josephus.

Another sacred site of no less sanctity is the tomb of Joshua the High Priest, situated on the outskirts of Baghdad. Twenty years ago the Moslems of the vicinity wrested the tomb from the Jewish guardians while the Turkish authorities looked on complacently, until the English manager of Sir David Sassoon's firm made representations to our consular authorities and eventually secured the restoration of the tomb to its rightful owners.

The third important site revered by the Jews of Mesopotamia is the tomb of Ezekiel, situated on an inlet from the Hindiah Canal, not far from the Euphrates and Babylon. By the side of a picturesque village named Kefil there is a little Jewish colony settled as guardians of the tomb, living on the friendliest terms with the Moslem villagers, who regard them, however, with considerable

contempt. On my last visit to Kefil I was able to purchase ten eggs for a penny, a fowl for fivepence, and a brace of partridges for sevenpence.

After the occupation of the "Garden of Eden" the British forces proceeded beyond Ezra's tomb to the capture of an important city on the river Tigris, by the name of Amara. This is now a very flourishing place, and contains the headquarters of an interesting sect known as the *Sabeans*, or Star-worshippers, whose religious ideas probably have a Babylonian origin.

There are many small sects of this kind in different parts of Turkey, such as the Yezidees, Shabakahs, and Bejwans, near Nineveh, the Kizil-bashis of Asia Minor, and the secret sects of Syria. Besides speaking Arabic, which is the common language of the whole of Mesopotamia, these Star-worshippers have a household language of their own that is also the language of their sacred books and is called Mandaitic. This is very closely allied to the Syriac spoken by the Christian villagers to the north of Mosul. They never intermarry with strangers, and, like the Druzes, they never accept a proselyte to their faith nor have any permanent place of worship. They are a peaceful and industrious people, occupied with raising the finest dairy produce of Mesopotamia, with building light canoes, and especially are they famous as silversmiths, working a beautiful inlaid work with black metal upon silver or gold ornaments. They possess a remarkably fine physique, and with their

long dark beards the Sabean men are typical of what we imagine the ancient patriarchs were like who came from the country which is now the home of these Sabeans. It is said that they turn to the North Star whenever they pray, and that they go through some form of baptism every Sunday. Their greatest festival takes place on the last day of every year, and is known as the Day of Renunciation. They hold a sort of watchnight service of the eve of the New Year, and present a solemn sacrifice to the Judge of the Underworld, which seems to indicate that in earlier times they were somewhat allied to the Yezidees in the north of Mesopotamia. Each of these Sabeans possesses a special white robe with which the Star-worshipper clothes himself upon emerging from the waters at their ceremonial baptisms. This garment is carefully preserved as a peculiarly sacred one, and is used at the burial of the owner, who believes that he will appear in the garment when he comes up for judgment before the Prince of the Nether World. At the annual festival on New Year's Eve the Sabeans erect a mud altar in their temporary tent, where small cakes are prepared from barley meal and the oil of sesame seed. The cakes are baked in the oven by the side of the altar; a pigeon is slain, and four drops of its blood are carefully placed upon each cake, so as to form the sacred Cross. Then, while their sacred book is being read, the cakes are carried round to the assembled company by the principal priests, who place one of these

cakes in the mouth of each worshipper. The dead pigeon is then buried behind the altar inside their temporary tabernacle. This is a sort of annual communion service with the Sabeans, and always takes place on the banks of the Tigris near Amara.

The Sabeans possess a mass of sacred literature. Their chief book is a large volume divided into two parts ; the reading matter begins at both ends and finishes in the middle ; that is to say, the reader can begin at one end of the book, and then when he reaches the middle he turns the book upside down and begins at the other end. They believe that Mohammed was the last of the false prophets, and they state that at the time of the Abbaside dynasty there were four hundred centres of Sabean worship in Mesopotamia. The High Priest of the Sabeans was imprisoned a few years ago at Basra on a charge of attempting to foment a rebellion of the Arab tribes against the Turks.

They gave a very hearty welcome to the British troops on their arrival at Amara. They were then kept busy supplying their wares to British officers and men, who hastened to purchase specimens of their wonderful silver-work. There is little doubt that in more peaceful times they will develop into a flourishing community, and possibly expand once more into every town and district of Mesopotamia.

Another interesting set of people, allied to the Sabeans, are the Yezidees or " Devil-worshippers." They inhabit a number of unkempt villages near Mosul and in the Sinjar Mountains. They seem

to belong to a Kurdish stock, and speak Kurdish as well as Arabic. There are probably some forty thousand Yezidees in Mesopotamia and six thousand in the Caucasus. Their headquarters are at Sheikh Adi, a weird place north-east of ancient Nineveh. They have many excellent characteristics, though they are profoundly ignorant and superstitious. They are a sturdy race, hard-working, brave, peaceful, hospitable, good-humoured, and always more friendly to Christians and Jews than to Moslems. The Turks have frequently treated them very badly, and in 1892 attempted to exterminate them. Omar Pasha, the Governor of Mosul, invited the chiefs to a dinner and a conference. While feasting as the guests of the Governor, a signal was given and the whole of the seventy chiefs were brutally murdered by Turkish troops. It is hardly correct to call the Yezidees "Devil-worshippers," for they all believe in a great God who created the universe; but they pay deference to the "Prince of this World," lest they should suffer from his vengeance. They avoid the use of words that begin with the same letter as Satan's name, and instead of using the common Arabic words for the devil they speak of him as the "Prince of Darkness," "Lord of the Evening," or the "Exalted Chief." Many of the Yezidees practise baptisms; they make the sign of the cross, and kiss the threshold of Christian churches. They adore the rising sun, and kiss the first rays of light that strike their dwellings. They will not

blow out a candle with their breath, or spit on fire. They observe a sacrificial festival allied to the Jewish Passover.

There is not a single sect amongst the Moslems whose faith and practice is based solely upon the Koran, the text of which is supposed to be so sacred that only the Companions of Mohammed are considered capable of being commentators upon it. Therefore the chief work committed to Moslem theologians is to learn the Holy Book by heart, to become masters of the traditions and familiar with the early commentators. It was found necessary to systematise all the traditions and judgments given by the Khalifs and Mujtahidin. This brought about the four systems of jurisprudence founded by the four Imams: (1) Abu Hanifa, (2) Ibn Malik, (3) As-Shafi, (4) Ibn Hanbal. These were all regarded as Mujtahidin of the highest rank, and the Sunnis consider that there has been no true Mujtahid since them. The followers of these four men represent the four orthodox sects of Islam, to one or other of which all Moslems except the Shiahs belong, and which are all represented in the city of Baghdad.

The first Imam was born at Basra in A.D. 699. He spent the greater part of his life at Kufa, and died at Baghdad A.D. 767. The magnificent mosque at Muadham contains the tomb of this famous first Imam.

The second Imam, Ibn Malik (A.D. 713–795), spent the whole of his life in Medina. The third

Imam, As-Shafi, was born in Mecca; he came twice to Baghdad, in A.D. 810 and again in 813, and died at Cairo A.D. 820. Ibn Hanbal, the last great orthodox Imam, was born at Baghdad A.D. 780, where he lived during the reign of the Khalif Mamoun and was buried at Muadham, but the river has carried away his tomb. His system has practically ceased to exist. There is no Mufti of the sect in the city of Mecca, although the other three are still represented there.

The most famous tomb in Baghdad is that of Sheikh Abd'l ul Kadir (A.D. 1252), who was known as the great commentator on the Koran. Many thousands of pilgrims come to Mesopotamia from different parts of the Mohammedan world to visit his tomb, but he is a particular favourite with the inhabitants of Morocco. A story is told of how the Sheikh delivered a course of sermons in Baghdad upon the Koran. He began by explaining the meaning of the dot which comes under the first letter of the Holy Book. He had lectured on this dot for nearly three months, when one night the Angel Gabriel appeared to him and informed him that all he had been saying about the dot was perfectly correct, but it was not what God meant when He put the dot under the " B " in the first letter of the Koran.

There are many other sacred tombs in the neighbourhood of Baghdad. One striking one is known as the Tomb of Sheikh Maaruf el Kerkhi (1215), not far from the shrine of the Bektash dervishes. He

was the leader of a flourishing sect, and innumerable graves surround his tomb; for, in accordance with Arab custom and belief, the people try to get buried near the grave of some great man who is able, they hope, to lead and guide them through the unknown regions after death.

Three miles from Baghdad is the sacred Shiah city of Kasmain. In the large mosque are the tombs of the seventh and ninth Shiah Imams, namely, Mousa Kasim and Mohammed Taki, grandfather and grandson. The son of the former is buried at Meshed, in Persia. Samarra, seventy miles north of Baghdad, is equally important to the Shiahs, but it also has a special interest for all the other sects of Islam. In its Great Mosque is enshrined the crevice from which the twelfth Imam, El Mahdi, is said to have disappeared, to come again, according to the belief of most Moslems, with Christ at the end of the world.

Salman Pak, eighteen miles south of Baghdad, is a place of Moslem pilgrimage close by the great arch of Ctesiphon. It is reputed to contain the bones of Mohammed's private barber, who now performs miracles of healing for the devotees at his shrine.

There is a considerable amount of saint-worship amongst the Moslem inhabitants of Mesopotamia, and numbers of shrines have been erected along many of the pilgrim roads. A story was told me concerning a very well-built tomb which was guarded and cared for by a pious Arab. In accord-

ance with their customs, the pilgrims entered a little room and prayed to the saint who was buried there, presenting the guardian with a coin that he might also intercede with God and the saint on their behalf. The guardian kept a servant and a fine white donkey, which he presented to his faithful servant when he had made his fortune and retired from business. Four years afterwards the old man was going along an unfrequented pilgrim road, and in an isolated spot he saw a small tomb. Curiosity led him to enter the tomb, where he found his servant in charge. The old man demanded to know who it was that was buried here. The servant replied: "Don't be angry with me, master. I was coming along this road with the fine white donkey which you gave me, when something happened and the donkey died. I did not know what I should do to get my living without the aid of my beloved donkey. I dug a big hole and buried him, and whilst I was covering up the grave and weeping at my loss, some pilgrims came by and thought I was burying a saint, so without asking questions they put some money into my hand. This put a thought into my head. I brought some stones and built a little tomb. The people have been very good to me, and I have always prayed for their welfare; but you must not be angry with me, master: it is the beloved old donkey that is buried here." The master chuckled to himself and walked up and down for a few minutes. He then returned to his servant and said: "It is a remarkable coincidence; how did you come to

think of it ? Did I ever tell you who was buried in my tomb ? " The servant replied he always suspected that it was some great personage, but the master had not told him who it was. " Well," said the master, " I really must tell you, but you must never mention it, for it was the mother of that donkey which was buried there " !

The story of the rise of the great Shiah sect is briefly as follows :—In the days of the Prophet Mohammed the leader of the Koreish tribe in Mecca was Abu Sofyan, who opposed the Prophet and was excluded from the amnesty granted to his foes when Mohammed took possession of Mecca. Two parties became recognised in the Holy City. One represented Mohammed's closest friends from Medina, and the other represented the sympathisers with the Koreish family at Mecca. The third Khalif, Osman by name, was a member of this family, and upon his succession his followers were given positions of influence. His opponents succeeded in assassinating him, and proclaimed Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed, to be the Khalif of Islam. Muawiyeh, the son of Abu Sofyan, was the Governor of Syria. He denounced Ali as a murderer. A battle took place, in which Ali's forces were defeated. Many of his followers seceded, and Ali was subsequently assassinated by one of these in the town of Kufa. Tradition declares that his body was placed upon a bier and carried by men out of the city, without any instructions as to where the Khalif was to be buried. They were

directed by the Almighty God, and after walking for about four miles with a great crowd of mourners behind them they suddenly found it impossible to go farther, and were evidently stopped by the intervention of the angels. It was concluded that this was the place where Ali was to be buried, and the city which has grown up around his gorgeous, golden-domed tomb is regarded by the Shiahs as the most sacred place on earth. Around this large walled city of Nejif, or Meshed Ali, there are great cemeteries where hundreds of thousands of Shiah Mohammedans have been buried. Thousands of corpses are brought every year to be buried in this sacred soil.

After the death of Ali, Hasan, his eldest son, renounced his claim to the Khalifate, and was subsequently poisoned. Yazid succeeded his father, Muawiyeh. He was hated by most of the Moslems, and especially by the men of Kufa, which was the centre of religious fanatics, the home of the doctors of the law and some specially powerful theologians. They invited Hosein, another son of Ali, to take away the Khalifate from the house of Umaiyeh. Hosein responded to their invitation and started for Kufa. Yazid sent the Governor of Basra to fight against him with a force of 3000 men. The treacherous fanatics of Kufa gave Hosein no assistance, and his brave escort of forty horsemen and one hundred foot-soldiers fell, one by one, until all were killed and Hosein was left alone with his little child. The scene was a strange one, and the tragic

death of Hosein is commemorated every year on the 10th day of Moharrem in the great Shiah Passion Play. Hosein was seated upon the ground with his infant son running round him and all his followers lying dead close by. His enemies were longing for his blood, but were afraid to touch the grandson of the prophet Mohammed. Hosein took the little lad into his arms, when a chance arrow pierced the child's ear and it died at once. He placed the corpse on the ground, saying, "We have come from God and we return to Him. O God, give me strength to bear these misfortunes." He went to the Euphrates, which flowed close by, and as he stooped to drink an arrow struck him in the mouth. His enemies were now emboldened to rush upon him, and they speedily put an end to his life (A.D. 680). The plain of Kerbela, where Hosein was killed, has become as sacred as the city of Nejif, and the city of Kerbela is more honoured than Mecca as a place of pilgrimage for the Shiah Mohammedans.

The whole of the different branches of the Shiah sect refuse to recognise any but Ali as the true successor to Mohammed, the only rightful Khalif of Islam.

The chief industry of Kerbela is the manufacture of "torbas." These are small pieces of baked clay, generally about two or three inches long, and of various shapes. They bear upon them the names of Ali and Fatima. They are made of the holy soil from around the cities of Kerbela and Nejif. They are purchased by the pilgrims and

reverently carried home, to be subsequently used on every occasion when prayer is offered. The "torbas" are placed upon the ground, and the forehead, in prayer, is brought down until it touches the sacred clay.

Some Englishmen have declared that the Turk, though a bad administrator, is not a brutal tyrant, at any rate not in his dealings with Mohammedans, and that therefore in Mesopotamia the Arabs still love the Turk more than their new masters. The facts, however, go to prove the contrary. Take, for example, what has happened at Kerbela, the most sacred Moslem city in the country. In 1854, while the Boundary Commissioners were assembled in Erzeroom, a despatch announced the massacre of 22,000 Shiahs by the Turks in Kerbela. In April 1916 a Turkish force attacked Kerbela, and bombarded the sacred mosques of Hosein and Abbas; but the inhabitants defended the city and compelled the Turks to retire. Shortly afterwards another expedition arrived, and the commander pleaded he only wanted permission for the troops to pass through the town, as he intended to defend it from the approaching enemy. The chiefs, who knew the smooth-tongued Turk better than most Europeans, refused, as Kerbela, they pointed out, did not lie on the road to Kût. The commander turned to the chiefs of Hillah with the same request. These so-called "lovers of the Turk" five times refused a passage through their town, and the revictualling of the Turkish troops. The

commander at last took a copy of the Koran and wrote upon it: "The Book of God introduces us to you. It binds us to you and yours with a solemn promise which we have made before God and His Prophet. We bear you no ill-will, we will do you no harm; your possessions, your women, and your honour will be safe; we only ask for a free passage and food for our troops." The Turks have always played upon the fervent religious fanaticism of their Moslem subjects, and once again, after these solemn declarations, the religious appeal was successful. The troops were admitted; they at once took possession of the town defences, and then invited the chiefs to a conference with the commander. They came, and were of course arrested and imprisoned. The following day fifteen Arab notables and chiefs were hanged, in flagrant defiance of the sacred promise sworn on the Koran a few days before. That night the exasperated inhabitants attacked the Turkish troops, who at once retaliated, and in a few hours nearly half the city was reduced to ashes by the Turkish artillery.

The Moslem soldiers suffered as much as the civilian population. On my way to a city in Asia Minor some years ago, I arrived at a caravanserai just before sunset, and saw a company of miserable soldiers coming to the place, riding on small donkeys. They were terribly ill, suffering from fever and unable to walk. From their lips I learned that their regiment had been stricken by an outbreak of typhus and typhoid; most of their

companions had died in the barracks, and they were at last sent off to their homes, six days' journey away, with only a few pence in their pockets, and these small donkeys as their only means of conveyance. The following day the rain came down in torrents, but the officers in charge of the group urged them forward, and for eight hours these miserable Moslem soldiers were driven through torrents of rain, with the result that most of them died before they reached their homes.

The treacherous Turk can play the Pious Piper before the far-away Moslems of India as cleverly as he acts the penitent thief before his European sympathisers ; but unless we are prepared to ignore the facts of his history we must agree with thousands of Indian Moslem soldiers who saw the Turk in Mesopotamia, Syria, and Asia Minor, that he is not a pious Moslem, and that even to his troops and to his Moslem subjects he has too often acted as a brutal tyrant.

CHAPTER X

THE HIGHLANDS OF KURDISTAN

KURDISTAN is more mountainous and more picturesque than the wildest highlands of Scotland, and it may some day prove to be as indispensable to the city of Baghdad as are the Highlands of our Isles to the metropolis of our Empire. These wild, rugged regions lie to the north and north-east of Mesopotamia, and are inhabited by two distinct classes of Kurds, as well as by four different Christian communities. There are the settled Kurdish villagers and townsfolk, who have little sympathy with the roving robber tribesmen of the same race; but their migration into the districts of Armenia has created a problem that will be difficult to solve.

In addition to the Armenians, there are three other Christian communities scattered about amongst the mountains of Kurdistan. They are known as (1) the Assyrians, Nestorians, or Eastern Syrians, (2) the Jacobites or Western Syrians, and (3) the Chaldeans. These all speak Syriac of different dialects, and most of them are acquainted with



A Canyon in Kurdistan. Chamba d' Malik in the valley of the Zab.



The mountains of Jilu in Kurdistan. A view from Julamek near the headquarters of the Nestorians, or Assyrian Christians.

Arabic and Kurdish. They are descended from the same original stock, and are distinguished chiefly by questions of theology. The Assyrians acknowledge the leadership of the patriarch Mar Shimoon, who resided at Kochanes, in the mountains. The Jacobite patriarch lives at a monastery near Mardin; while the Chaldeans represent those Assyrians who have become united to the Church of Rome under the headship of a Chaldean patriarch who resides at Mosul. The Chaldean and the Syrian Catholic community have always been under the protection of France, which is the main reason why the French claimed mandatory powers for the city of Mosul.

The Kurds for the most part are destitute of religious beliefs, but as nominal Mohammedans they were permitted to be armed by the Turks, who, finding it impossible to subdue them, caused them to be enrolled as irregular cavalry, and practically confided to them the duty of robbing and enslaving their Christian neighbours. There was a time, however, within the memory of the present generation, when the Kurd had a better reputation than he has to-day, when he would, for example, scorn to injure the women-folk of a tribe or community with which he was at war. The Turks, however, are responsible for lending their aid to the most vicious of the Kurdish chieftains, and for bestowing their patronage upon those who fostered the demoralised standards for which the Kurds are now so famous.

They are supposed to be descended from the ancient Carduchi, who harassed the 10,000 Greeks that were led by Xenophon through the borders of Kurdistan. An Assyrian inscription, discovered at Nineveh, informs us that at the time of a great deluge a ship or ark rested upon the "mountain of Nizir," which is identified with a place near Rowanduz, whose Kurdish inhabitants earnestly petitioned the British military authorities to include them within the British mandatory sphere of Mesopotamia. Sir Henry Rawlinson suggested it was from these mountains that the white races came, called in Genesis "the sons of God," who in the land of Shinar intermarried with the darker "daughters of men."

In some of my journeys through the mountains I was much impressed by the physical characteristics of the Kurdish and Christian villagers. Both are frequently blue-eyed, of fairer complexion than the dwellers in Mesopotamia; they have somewhat European features, and are as strong and as sturdy as the Highlanders of Scotland; but the Kurds are generally vicious, heartless, cruel, and cowardly to the last degree.

I have met some Kurds, however, who are inclined to live peaceably with their neighbours, who have even protected the Christian villagers, at times, from the robber tribesmen; and some of the best, as well as some of the worst, Turkish officials have hailed from Kurdistan. It was a common saying in the cities of the Tigris that the

Kurds were always in the way. They would either be found as robber bands blocking the mountain path, or as porters they could be seen blocking the streets of the big cities. In a land where cranes and trollies are unknown, these powerful mountaineers were able to negotiate the heaviest bales of merchandise. Occasionally one of them would be seen creeping through the busy bazaars with a piano or a wardrobe on his back. The brown felt pudding-basin hat readily distinguishes the Kurd from the other races of Mesopotamia.

All the seamen upon the river steamers, as well as most of the servants in the houses of Europeans, come from the Christian villages of Kurdistan. They are of similar physique, and as warlike as the Kurds, but they are better educated, and there is no doubt that they would have been able to hold their own in these mountains if they had been placed, by the Turkish Government, upon an equal footing with the Kurds. Those who are acquainted with the country and the people are convinced that the problems of Kurdistan will in due time disappear with the removal of the Turk, who has so long blighted the land and its inhabitants. If only the criminal classes had been lawfully punished and equal justice administered to all Turkish subjects, there would have been no massacres and no such serious problems as now confront the Allies in the settlement of the Caucasus and Kurdistan.

These Turkish-trained ruffians gave us an immense amount of trouble on the Persian frontier

and in the Mosul vilayet; they imagined they could murder political officers with impunity, and military officers mysteriously disappeared from some of the rest camps. They were protected, to some extent, from punitive expeditions by the inaccessibility of their mountain homesteads along the Turko-Persian frontier, whence they would suddenly emerge to raid their Christian neighbours, or prey upon the peaceful Moslem merchants of Persia. They waylaid every Moslem pilgrim and spoiled the merchants who tried to make use of the ancient highways that lead from Mesopotamia to Persia and India. We could not avoid facing the problems of Southern Kurdistan, for the Kurds would not mind their own business and persistently interfered with ours. They harassed every convoy, raided our lines of communication, captured several cars on their way to the Caspian Sea, murdered the occupants, and committed so many atrocities that suitable escorts had to be sent with every motor lorry travelling along the road to Hamadan.

It will not be necessary, as some suppose, to maintain perpetually a large army in Northern Mesopotamia for the purpose of keeping order. The small punitive expeditions that were undertaken by Indian troops, Assyrian volunteers, with mountain batteries, proved equal to the task of subduing some of the worst of the Kurdish tribes in the most inaccessible regions of Southern Kurdistan. The country is not so difficult as the

mountainous regions beyond the frontiers of India, and though there is plenty of racial bitterness, there is practically no religious fanaticism; for the Kurds are robbers and murderers pure and simple, and the secret of all success must lie in the establishment of British prestige. This cannot be done in a moment, but, when once it is accomplished, the Kurdish chieftains will hesitate to break their agreements, for their innate selfishness will suffice to restrain them from *unprofitable* raids. They will discover there is greater gain in living peaceably with their new neighbours, who will also be in a better position than the Armenians to punish them for their unspeakable crimes.

Some years before the war British merchants in Baghdad complained that their trade with Persia had come almost to a standstill. The Germans had something to do with this, for they were undermining our prestige; but the Kurds were responsible for preventing the passage of British goods along the roads to Persia, and for making havoc of the once flourishing border towns. Persia is now recovering from anarchy, famine, and the effects of the war. She offers unique prospects to European merchants, but her trade would be stopped, her treasury would be empty, and her independence would be imperilled if the Kurds were permitted to continue to ravage her borders.

Some very important roads from Persia to Europe lie through Kurdistan, and the rapidity of Persia's recovery, as well as the value of Persia's minerals,

must largely depend upon the opening up of secure communication with Europe and the Mediterranean ports. We cannot shirk the problems of Kurdistan; there is no alternative, we are bound to face them; our own security and the world's peace depend upon a satisfactory settlement of the *whole* of the former Turkish Empire.

There is an immense amount of mineral wealth in Kurdistan and the plateaux of Armenia; some of the finest tobacco is grown here, though the timber of Kurdistan is scarce and said to be worth its weight in gold. Some years ago the Turks prohibited me from purchasing a small house in a salubrious Assyrian Christian village. I wanted to make use of it as a holiday resort for our workers in Mesopotamia, but the Government objected to an Englishman owning property in a Christian village. With the settlement of Kurdistan and the construction of roads and railways, there is little doubt that the British will find many a "white man's corner" in these beautiful mountains, and a place like Rowanduz will become an ideal summer refuge from the scorching plains of the south. I fully anticipate that amongst these mountains there will some day be established the summer headquarters of the Mesopotamian Government, to serve the same purpose for Baghdad that Simla has served for Calcutta.

Though I have not had the privilege of penetrating far into Kurdistan, I have frequently travelled through the borders of the country, and have had

some exciting experiences with the Kurds of Jezireh and the villagers to the north of Nisibin.

On the 17th of April 1901 I started upon a journey to the east of Mosul. My catechist and servants left two hours before me, whilst I was obtaining letters of introduction to some of the leading villagers. As soon as I was ready I mounted my bicycle and quickly caught them up. The village of Neby Yunis is the first place of interest one passes immediately after crossing the Mosul bridge. On the north side of the road is the famous mound of Kuyunjik, and beyond it are innumerable other mounds that cover the ruins of ancient Nineveh. After winding in and out amongst the ruins, I suddenly turned a corner and came upon a company of horsemen. Three Turkish officials, mounted on high-spirited Arab mares, led the procession, with some Arab notables following in single file. The leading horse bowed its acknowledgment to the superiority of my iron steed, bolted up the bank, and left its rider rolling in the dust. The second and third did likewise as they came in sight of my bicycle. I stopped to apologise, and the mishap proved to be a pleasant introduction to my wondering friends.

I quickly reached the Christian village of Bartolli, where all the inhabitants turned out to see me. They swarmed upon the hillock of stable refuse outside the village to gaze at my iron horse, with many exclamations of wonder, while the children ran around me screaming and yelling their delight.

Most of these villagers were Syrian Jacobites, and all very poor as a result of long years of Turkish exactions. The head man hospitably received me into his miserably dirty house, where there was only one decent room. I quickly suggested transferring my bedding to the flat roof, where I had a talk with the villagers till long after sunset, and then tried to sleep.

We started off soon after sunrise, and again a large crowd turned out to see me mount my bicycle. In about an hour we reached a nice cool stream in a pleasant valley, where I called a halt and fixed up an impromptu tent by turning my bicycle upside down and spreading a blanket over the wheels. We refreshed ourselves with a much-needed bath, and then I lay down in the shade of my blanket in order to recover some of the sleep that had been snatched from me during the night by the village vermin, while one of the servants returned to rescue an indispensable teapot that had been left behind. Early in the afternoon we ascended a very steep path up the side of Jebel Maklub until we reached the doors of a Syrian Jacobite monastery called Sheikh Matti. We were kindly received by the aged Bishop and two monks, who escorted us to the Bishop's dirty little room, with two small windows from which one obtained a glorious glimpse of the extensive plain that reaches beyond Mosul to the Sinjar Mountains. We subsequently visited the cave where the much-revered Ibn Hebræus studied and wrote his famous commentaries. Late that

night a well-armed Kurdish ruffian was admitted to the hospitality of the monastery. He was accompanied by a young girl, who was kindly entertained by the deaconesses who, strange to say, reside at the monastery. The Kurd and his stolen bride departed before sunrise, and in the morning I learned from the Bishop the story of a Kurdish lover whose petitions had been rejected by the father of the girl; so he arranged a midnight elopement and outwitted his pursuers by seeking the shelter of a Christian monastery at night, and hiding by day in the caves of the mountains.

The following day we wandered to the far side of the mountain in order to visit the fine ruined monastery of Mar Ebrahom, which is beautifully situated in a lovely gorge overlooking the Upper Zab and the country that stretches towards Erebil. We came across a number of Kurds who were cutting down the oaks for the purpose of preparing charcoal, and we were astonished to see one powerful Kurdish girl, of fifteen summers only, who was carrying on her back a huge sack of charcoal about twice her size. We had an exciting experience with half a dozen wild boar, such as one may encounter in many parts of the mountains. We possessed but one revolver, so beat a hasty retreat when we stumbled too near the lair of an angry sow. On our return the Bishop pointed out the entrance to a long tunnel that went right from his monastery through the mountain to the ruins of Mar Ebrahom. He also produced an ancient volume containing the

information that soon after the death of Constantine the Great the monastery and the surrounding caves were inhabited by over 1200 monks. He showed us some famous old tombs in his monastery church, bearing inscriptions that date back nearly 1600 years.

I had a narrow escape from a nasty accident when the Bishop insisted on my explaining to him the method of riding a bicycle. I protested there was no place in the monastery where I could conveniently mount it, but he compelled me to go with him to a narrow roof, and there I tried, as carefully as possible, to show him how I mounted the iron horse. A sudden gust of wind carried me along farther than I had intended to go, and I was nearly hurled headlong into the valley below, only saving my neck by breaking my knees upon the small coping that surrounded the roof.

The next day I proceeded towards the village of Bashaikah, passing through a few Mohammedan hamlets belonging to the Shiah sect known as the Shabakah. Bashaikah is also a Christian Jacobite village, where I was very warmly welcomed by the priest, who invited me to take up my quarters inside the church, as this seemed to be the regular caravanserai for travellers. Our animals were tethered to trees in the churchyard, and, by way of showing special honour to an English cleric, the priest ordered my bed to be spread on the chancel steps, and the episcopal chair was brought out of the sanctuary to serve me as a table We were

interested to learn that the fine large church had been built entirely by the villagers. It was a substantial marble structure without transepts, but the customary screened chancel and nave were covered with quite a respectable dome. The village priest was the head mason of the village, as well as being the chief farmer and spiritual adviser to his people.

I had a very friendly reception in the neighbouring village of Bahsani, and in some of the Yezidee villages of the district, where we were permitted to enter their roofless sanctuaries, which had the appearance of Druidical cromlechs.

Soon after my return to Mosul I received a telegram from an American missionary of Urumiah, to say he was smitten with sunstroke at the mountain village of Dehi. There was no doctor at that time in Mosul, and as I was the only European friend likely to be able to help him, I decided to start away the same evening, accompanied by a well-known Syrian who had spent many years in America. This gentleman, Daoud by name, procured the necessary mules after much difficulty, while I busied myself with the packing of medicines and provisions. As the shade temperature was about 97°, it was advisable to travel only by night. The muleteer promised to hurry us across the scorching plain so that we might reach the village of Dehok, at the foot of the mountains, soon after sunrise. As usual, however, we started badly, for the mules were two hours late. We then learned

to our sorrow that the animals, which the muleteer declared were as frisky as gazelles, had only reached Mosul with merchandise that morning, so that they were tired and we were consequently making very slow progress. After the busy day spent in making preparations, we also began to feel painfully sleepy, and at midnight we stopped for half an hour to feed the mules. Wrapped up in my overcoat, I lay down upon the thorny earth and immediately fell fast asleep. To wake up and mount a mule after so brief a nap is an agonising experience, but we reminded ourselves of the still far-distant shelter that could not be reached before the break of day. We were grieved to learn at sunrise that it would still take us five hours to reach Dehok. Within an hour the sun began to feel unpleasantly hot · we knew that a few hours of this sort of travelling under a scorching sun would certainly incapacitate us, so we decided to make for a village six miles distant. The heat was terrific, and the glare of the barren plain, for that few miles, was like the glow of a furnace fire. There was no tree or shade of any kind to be seen in the plain, and our only hope of shelter was to ride on with all speed to the village.

At last we arrived, and found it to be a half-ruined Yezidee village. Many of the huts were unoccupied, and the few people that remained were evidently in great misery and destitution. There were no cows, no chickens, no eggs; there was no food of any kind to be bought, and we found the place

intolerably hot, swarming with flies, and unspeakably dirty; still, we were thankful for the small amount of shelter afforded us by a stone wall and mud roof. A little porridge and a cup of cocoa refreshed us, but we sorely needed rest, and we all complained of a splitting headache, the flies worried us, and sleep seemed impossible in such a place. My companions drew attention to our bloodshot eyes and declared we should never be able to reach the mountain village if every step of the journey was to be as bad as this. I looked about for a cooler place, and suddenly alighted upon a very dark, dirty stable with two horses in it. The people warned me not to enter it, but I resolved to risk it and, putting on my Wellington boots, I carried my camp bedstead into the stable and placed it in the darkest corner and tried to steal a little sleep before the vermin found me out. The people were right, but I managed to get in two hours' slumber. My companions followed my example, and after another meal we mounted our animals and started away two hours before sunset.

For an hour we skirted the foot of a small mountain, and then our road lay through a pleasant valley, in some places well wooded, whilst here and there we came across picturesque waterfalls partially concealed by the foliage. On the slopes of the mountains to the right of the road there lay an enormous stretch of vineyards: the town was on the opposite side, and the direct path should have brought us to our resting-place in two and a half

hours. Without being aware of our muleteers' plans, for reasons of their own they led us by a circuitous road that delayed us nearly three hours. On reaching the town we took refuge in a quiet corner on the roof of a khan, had a good meal, and then rolled off into a sound slumber. We were now safe from the heat of the plain, for the air of Dehok was decidedly cooler than that of Mosul, and our road henceforth led up into the mountains.

We started soon after sunrise, passed through some beautifully hilly country, and after a few hours reached the Kurdish village of Kemakah, charmingly situated upon a mountain ridge, with a lovely verdant valley spreading out before it. The sheikh's house was nicely built and well kept, but the aged owner was absent, and we were welcomed by his son with every mark of honour and respect. Carpets and cushions were spread for us under a large nubbak tree, and some of the villagers were quickly ordered to supply us with all the food and water we needed.

With true Eastern courtesy, which to the Western traveller passes for impertinence, we were duly asked to explain the object of our journey and all our business. We told them of the sick missionary in Dehi, and the people were at once persuaded that I was a first-class doctor and Daoud was my assistant. We were therefore obliged to see a number of patients and freely dispensed our medicines, never omitting, however, the necessary preliminary of examining the pulse before we

pronounced upon the complaint or its remedy. To have treated an ulcer with a little boracic before feeling the pulse would have spoiled our chances of success.

A little after noon, when thoroughly tired, we begged leave to take a little sleep; but we were not permitted to rest long in peace, for most of the women of the village had been gathered in the sheikh's house, and we were asked to go and see them before proceeding on our journey. An immense number of complaints were brought before us, and we knew it would be useless to plead our inability, so we commenced to distribute more medicines in the wisest way possible. The people have their own ideas about diseases and remedies, wherefore Daoud wisely insisted upon humouring them with the use of a terminology that they understood; so a calomel tabloid was described as a "hot" remedy for a "cold" complaint; quinine became a "cold" remedy for a "hot" complaint; while a tonic was described as an "expulsive" remedy for the "air" in the lungs. This condescension to their prejudices no doubt saved us a lot of time, added to the efficacy of our remedies, and augmented our reputation.

The heat of the day having thus passed very pleasantly, we again mounted our mules, crossed the valley, and climbed the second mountain range. As soon as we reached the summit there lay before us another charming village, nestling amid numerous fruit-gardens, surrounded by extensive vineyards,

and crouching, as it were, beneath the guard of a hundred stately poplars. It was nearly sunset when we reached this Assyrian Christian village; the muleteers were anxious to stay, but we were told that Dehi was only three hours beyond, so we determined to press on.

We struggled along slowly in the darkness, and after two and a half hours reached another Kurdish village, for the muleteers had once more taken the wrong road. The dogs began to bark, and in a moment we were surrounded by a suspicious crowd of Kurds, all armed with rifles and daggers. Our muleteers again tried to force us to stay, but it was evident that by doing so we should certainly have been robbed. Half an hour's wrangling seemed to make no improvement in the situation, for the villagers began to unstrap our baggage, and matters looked so serious that I felt obliged to order the Zaptiah, who was our official guard, to leave the village at once and walk on in front of me. At the same moment I whispered to Daoud to make terms with the village sheikh and to offer him a bribe if he would accompany us as guide. The double move proved successful, and we started away with the would-be robber at our head. Travelling was now very difficult and really dangerous in the darkness. Three times I rolled off my saddle in consequence of the girths working themselves loose through the steep ascents and descents of the road. Soon after midnight we entered the little village of Dehi. The barking of the dogs

aroused everybody, and immediately the roofs of the houses were alive with the disturbed villagers. We made anxious inquiries after the missionary, and were gratified to learn that he had made a rapid recovery and was slumbering in a tent just outside the village, so we decided not to disturb him till the morning.

We spent five pleasant days in this charming mountain village. It is a place that has frequently been used as a summer resort for the American missionaries who formerly worked in Mosul. The village is situated about 2500 feet above sea-level, and the stately mountains present a magnificent spectacle, rising higher and higher, range after range, beyond the village towards the Tiari country. The snow is always visible and can be reached in a walk of six or seven hours from the village. Our tent was pitched in a shady spot by the side of a great ravine, and during the night I found it necessary to cover myself with three thick blankets as a protection from the wind that swept down the gorge.

Early in the morning we had a pleasant talk with some of the villagers, and the missionary suggested to a young lad that he should go and bring us some honey for breakfast. He was wearing a brown felt hat exactly the shape of an inverted pudding-basin. In a very short time he returned to us with the hat full of honey, mixed with wild bees, as he had evidently made a raid upon a mountain hive. We were visited day after day by large numbers of

Kurds, and accepted invitations to some of their villages.

Our journey back to Mosul was by a different road, and, as a rumour was spread around that a European doctor was travelling through the mountains, the villagers gave us no rest; at every stopping-place we were besieged by unreasonable crowds clamouring for medicines.

On one of our night journeys I had a terrible fright and a narrow escape from sudden death We were proceeding slowly one behind the other along a difficult mountain path, in the pitch darkness made more dense by the overhanging oaks and towering rocks. The first mule was being led by our guide and we all followed closely behind, in and out, up and down, stumbling and slipping over ugly rocks and stones. The girth of my English saddle occasionally getting loose upon the small mountain mule, made it difficult for me to keep quite close to the one in front. At a sharp turn in the path the leaders disappeared and my animal, losing the way, kept straight on. Suddenly, to my horror, I saw the mule had come to the very brink of a precipice, revealed by the light of a camp-fire in the valley beneath. Two more steps and we would have gone headlong over the precipice. I drew the reins with all my might; to turn about was dangerous, for an awkward step backwards would have been fatal, so I simply slid off as gently as possible, and when I reached the ground I breathed a thanksgiving and determined to ride no more till break of day. I

shouted to my companions to wait for me till I had discovered the track, and having reached them I delivered the reins of my mule to one of the men and walked along for the rest of the night's march.

The difficulties were such that we found it impossible to complete the stage that night to Dehok, so called a halt in a deep ravine by the side of a very unpleasant sulphur spring. A few strangers were prowling about, and as I could not see who or what they were, I warned the servants to watch in turn, but being excessively tired they all quickly fell asleep. As the baggage was mine and not theirs, I suppose it was only natural that anxiety for its safety successfully kept me awake. At the dawn of day I noticed a stranger lying asleep close by me. He was an ill-clad Turkish soldier who had borrowed one of our saddle-bags to serve as a covering, and there he lay with his legs inside it, a perfect picture of poverty.

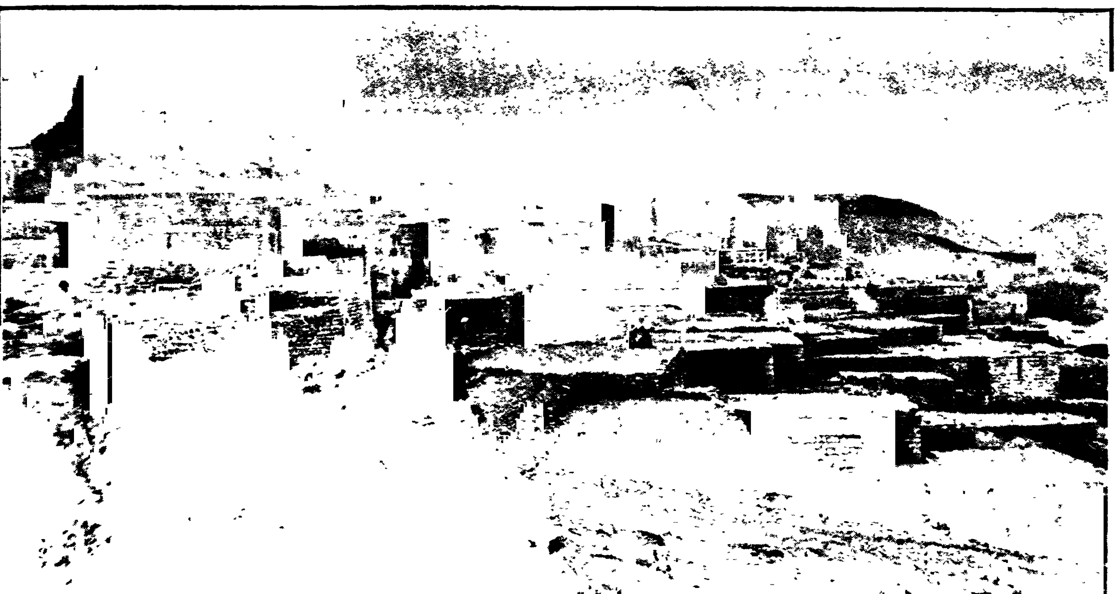
The only village we stopped at on this return journey was the famous Chaldean Christian village of Tel-Keif, about ten miles from Mosul. The ride from here across the hot plain to Mosul was a short but trying one, yet all was forgotten in the long sleep we slept that night in our own clean beds upon our own hospitable roofs.

CHAPTER XI

CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN MESOPOTAMIA

THE Apostle St Thomas is credited with having found his way to the banks of the Euphrates and the Tigris, where, it is said, he successfully evangelised those dwellers in Mesopotamia of whom some were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. The Church which was founded here evidently developed remarkable missionary activity, for within a few centuries its operations had extended to Persia, India, and the far-distant boundaries of China.

Political conditions constantly tended to isolate the churches of Mesopotamia from the rest of Christendom. The Roman Emperors and their successors were always at war with the various rulers of the lands beyond the Euphrates, and the inevitable result was that misunderstandings arose between the theologians of the different countries, the religious opinions of the Christians in Mesopotamia were regarded as heretical, and in due course these communities became known to Western Christendom as Nestorians.



Mardin, with ruined Turkish citadel on the summit of the hill. 3,000 feet below is an extensive plain reaching to the Sinjar Mountains, visible on the horizon.

Their missionary activity, however, was in no way diminished by their isolation from the main body of the Christian Church. Interesting rumours came from Persia of flourishing churches associated with the famous Prester John, and when Vasco da Gama discovered the Cape route to India, great was his surprise to be greeted by a Christian king who ruled over large provinces of Christian subjects along the Malabar coast. It is recorded that King Alfred the Great, in the year 883, sent a mission for devotional purposes to the shrine of St Thomas in Malabar, and that his messengers travelled by the customary overland route, through Asia Minor and Mesopotamia. When Haroun 'l Raschid was the great Khalif of Baghdad there were as many as twenty-five primates who acknowledged the supremacy of the Baghdad patriarch, and who guided the fortunes of the flourishing Christian churches that were established between Edessa and Pekin.

The descendants of the early Indian Christians still number about half a million souls in Malabar, and it is interesting to recall the fact that their evangelisation was effected in the early centuries of the Christian era from the land of Mesopotamia, the conquest of which became India's chief concern in the great world war.

The Malabar communities are still called the "Christians of St Thomas," from a tradition, as some suppose, that the Apostle himself laboured in India and was buried in Mylapore. It is more probable, however, that only the name came to

India with the missionaries from Mesopotamia who received their commission from the churches of St Thomas, and who would carry with them both the authority and the prestige of their apostolic founder. Some of these Christians are called "Jacobites," not because Jacob of Nisibin went to Malabar, but because his devoted labours have caused his name to become attached to that branch of the Church to which these Malabar Christians belong.

But the missionaries from Mesopotamia not only evangelised large portions of India, they penetrated to the confines of China at a time when travelling must have been most difficult and dangerous. An interesting book, written by a Chinaman, upon *The Nestorian Monument in China* throws light upon the successful labours of these early messengers to the Far East. For over 600 years (namely, from A.D. 618–1277) the Nestorian leaven gradually but surely permeated the whole tone of Chinese literature, and the theistic conceptions which are clearly expressed by Confucian and Tauoist writers can be traced to the Christian notions which the Chinese derived from the men of Mesopotamia. Professor Saeki informs us that an imperial edict was issued in the year 845, for the purpose of suppressing the foreign teachers who had found their way to China, which ordered 3000 Nestorian and Moslem teachers to return to secular life and cease bringing confusion into the national customs and manners of the Chinese. There are indications in

China to-day that the influence of these teachers has to some extent survived the repression that was intended to utterly crush it out. If, however, the marks of their successful labours have been mostly obliterated in China, we must not too hastily assume that this is solely because their presentation of Christianity was an imperfect one. We are learning to-day what havoc can be wrought in Christendom by persecution and war; we remember that many Christian provinces in North Africa and the East have been desolated by fanatical oppressors; and most missionaries will readily acknowledge the imperfections of our Western methods that hamper the effective presentation of the Truth to the Eastern mind. Nevertheless, the Gospel prevails in a world that lieth in wickedness, and the marvel remains that so much was accomplished in India and China by the early missionaries of Mesopotamia.

It is not only India and the Far East that owe their debt of gratitude to the Churches of Mesopotamia: the lands of the West are much more indebted to the learned Nestorian divines of the city of Baghdad. In the years that produced *The Arabian Nights*, when Islam flourished by the waters of Babylon, in the golden prime of Haroun 'l Raschid, there were some remarkable movements amongst the Moslems in favour of freethought and philosophical speculations. The followers of the Prophet not only fraternised with Christians, many of whom obtained high positions at the Sultan's court, but they persuaded the learned theologians

to translate the Greek philosophies of Aristotle and Plato into the Arabic tongue. It was thus that the Arabs in the East were able to preserve, through the Dark Ages, when barbarians overran Europe, the light and learning which is now claimed to be an essential element of Western culture. In subsequent years, when Mohammedanism spread through North Africa and established itself in Southern Spain, these Arabic writings found their way to the West and were retranslated at Granada and Cordova into the Romance languages of Europe. In this way the long-lost Greek philosophies were rediscovered, and the diligent search for the originals is known to have promoted that Revival of Learning which led up to the Reformation and changed the character of so many of the countries of Europe.

Those of us who have lived in Mesopotamia could sympathise with the frequent complaints made by our troops against the ferocious heat and the countless plagues that made life intolerable in that desolate land. Yet there was a time when the whole of Mesopotamia was a veritable Garden of Eden, due largely to the paramount influence of a Christian woman ; when 90 per cent. of its fertile soil was brought under cultivation by means of extensive irrigation. This was at the close of the Persian Sassanian dynasty, under the rule of Chosroes II., whose ruined palace is now represented by the great arch of Ctesiphon. The Parsees of Bombay forwarded an address to General Townshend in which they expressed their appreciation of

the fact that at the battle of Ctesiphon the General gave special orders to protect the venerable arch of Chosroes.

Chosroes II. was the last of the Sassanian monarchs who ruled over Mesopotamia before the Mohammedan invasion. He was a fugitive just before he succeeded to the throne, and whilst he was in exile he became deeply impressed by what he saw and heard of Christian worship. Consequently, in the earlier part of his reign he favoured the profession of Christianity, and contrary to the laws of the country he married a Christian wife, Sira or Shirin. He built her a summer palace in a salubrious spot, now also comparatively desolate, but still known as Kasr-i-Shirin, for the possession of which Russian and Turkish troops fought in the campaigns that swayed to and fro on the Persian frontier.

Chosroes had a superstitious reverence for the Christian saint and martyr, Sergius, whom he adopted as a sort of patron saint of Mesopotamia. The influence of Chosroes' Christian queen was so great that she obtained permission to build numerous churches and monasteries around Ctesiphon, and when she died her statue was sculptured and a present of one was sent by Chosroes to the Roman Emperor, while others were sent to various potentates in the East to signify the high regard held for this Christian queen by one of the most strange yet most successful monarchs of Mesopotamia.

Coming down to modern days, there is a brief but interesting chapter in the history of Christian

evangelism in Mesopotamia which is not very generally known. It might be incorrect to say that Plymouth Brethrenism was weaned in Mesopotamia, but we should not be far wrong in using this expression, for some of its prominent leaders were thrown together upon a work which its historian, Neatby, declares, "provided one of the most interesting episodes" in the whole of the history of the Plymouth sect. Anthony N. Groves was a dentist of Exeter, who, in obedience to what he believed to be the commands of Christ, sold all he had and started out in 1828 as a missionary to Mesopotamia. He was accompanied by a youth who was stone deaf, whom Groves had befriended in his affliction, and who now found it his delight to go with him to Baghdad as tutor to his boys. This youth was none other than the famous John Kitto, the C.M.S. compositor at the Malta printing press, who subsequently attained eminence in the department of Biblical literature. Kitto retained a real affection for his kindly benefactor, and in an enthusiastic eulogy of him declared that, "in the whole world, as far as I know it, there is not one man whose character I venerate so highly."

A year after Groves left England for Baghdad, a party of seven others started out to join him, and amongst them were Parnell, who afterwards became Lord Congleton, and Francis W. Newman, who became associated with his more famous brother, Cardinal Newman, in the Tractarian movement.

This second party of missionaries was detained

for fifteen months in Aleppo, and eventually reached Baghdad in 1831, the year of the great plague which carried off half the population of the city. The plague was followed by civil war, the city was besieged by Arab tribes, and bullets occasionally swept the flat roof of the house on the banks of the Tigris where Groves and his family slept.

Sorrow and misfortune dogged the steps of this pioneer band of missionaries: a flood carried away part of the mission house; Mrs Cronin, the mother of one of the missionaries, as well as the wife and a child of Mr Groves, died in Baghdad; Parnell, who married Cronin's sister in Aleppo, also buried his young wife there. Newman and Kitto returned to England in 1832. Groves left Baghdad for India in May 1833, and the mission in Mesopotamia was given up a few years later.

In 1856 the Rev. A. Stern paid a visit to Baghdad with a view to the opening up of missionary work amongst the Jews, and a little later Joseph Wolff, the son of a Bavarian rabbi, who had been baptized by a Benedictine monk, also came to Baghdad for the same purpose.

In 1876 the Free Church of Scotland sent one of its Bombay missionaries to sell Scriptures in Baghdad, where the British and Foreign Bible Society opened a depot in 1880. On the recommendation of Dr Bruce of Persia, the C.M.S. opened its work in Baghdad in 1882, and continued it without a break till Dr Johnson was removed by the Turks soon after the British occupation of Basra.

In addition to the Protestant Missions, a very extensive work has been carried on for over a century by the Carmelites and Dominicans of the Roman Communion. They have succeeded in absorbing the majority of the Eastern Christians into the Uniat communities which are called the Chaldean, the Syrian Catholic, and the Armenian Catholic Churches.



New Year's Day in the sacred city of Kerbela. About 20,000 men at prayer in the main street of the city. The chief Mujtahid is leading the prayers, and the two men who are standing upon platforms signal to the multitude the movements of the Mujtahid,

CHAPTER XII

MESOPOTAMIA AND MECCA

THE British Empire was never confronted by a greater peril than that which arose when the Sultan of Turkey proclaimed, at the instigation of Germany, a religious war to the two or three hundred millions of Mohammedans. Mr Morgenthau, the American Ambassador, has told us that his German colleague Wangenheim explained to him one of Germany's main purposes in forcing Turkey into the conflict. " He made this explanation quite nonchalantly, as though it had been quite the most ordinary matter in the world. Sitting in his office, puffing away at his big black German cigar, he unfolded Germany's scheme to arouse the whole fanatical Moslem world against the Christians." Germany had planned a real " Holy War " as one means of destroying English and French influence in the world. " Turkey herself is not the really important matter," said Wangenheim. " Her army is a small one, and we do not expect it to do very much. For the most part it will act on the defensive. But the big thing is the Moslem world. If

we can stir up the Moslems against the English and Russians we can force them to make peace." [1] So the German plan was forced upon a reluctant Sultan, and in order that its solemn significance may be properly appreciated I venture to quote the following summary of the Fetwa issued by the Sheikh 'l Islam at the time when the "Jehad" was proclaimed at Constantinople:—

> "When the Khalif declares a Jehad it will be necessary and imperative for all Moslems in all quarters of the world, whether young or old, to join the Jehad with all their might.
>
> "It is necessary for all Moslems living in the States of Russia, England, and France to take up arms and literally to join the Jehad. All who refrain from doing so will bring upon themselves the wrath of God and will be punished.
>
> "Even those who are brought against their will and with force are made to fight against a Mohammedan state will be committing murder punishable with hell-fire. Therefore in the present war all Mohammedans who are in England, France, Russia, Serbia, and Montenegro will be committing a great sin by fighting against Germany and Austria, who are protectors and friends of Islam."

In addition to this official proclamation, a pamphlet appeared which was read in the mosques

[1] *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, p. 105.

and distributed stealthily in India, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, and other Mohammedan countries. Mr Morgenthau gives us the translation of an extract which declares :—

> "The killing of infidels who rule over Islam has become a sacred duty, whether you do it secretly or openly. As the Koran has decreed: *Take them and kill them whenever you find them. Behold, we have delivered them into your hands and given you supreme power over them.* He who kills even one unbeliever of those who rule over us, whether he does it secretly or openly, shall be rewarded by God. And let every Moslem, in whatever part of the world he may be, swear a solemn oath to kill at least three or four infidels who rule over him, for they are the enemies of God and of the faith. Let every Moslem know that his reward for doing so shall be doubled by the God who created heaven and earth."[1]

It was evident that Germany's pretensions to be the friend of Islam were entirely insincere and altogether political. When General Smuts was in command of the British forces in East Africa, he reported upon the capture of the German archives at Moshi, where he found the following circular :—

> "You are requested to send within three months from date of receipt a report stating what can be done by means of Government

[1] *Secrets of the Bosphorus*, p. 106.

> servants and Government teachers to effectively counteract the spread of Islamic propaganda. Do you consider it possible to make a regulation prohibiting Islam altogether? Possibly a rule might be enforced by which teachers would not be allowed to perform circumcisions or act as preachers in the mosques, etc. The same prohibition might also be applied to other Government servants. The encouragement of pig-breeding among natives is recommended by experts as an effective means of stopping the spread of Islam. Please consider this point also."

I have so often drawn attention to this serious Eastern peril that some of my friends have wondered whether I was justified in laying so much emphasis upon the Moslem menace. The numerous quotations I adduce will assist my readers to gauge the import of a scheme which I characterise as one of the darkest plots ever conceived against the forces of civilisation.

A statement was made by the Earl of Crewe in the House of Lords on 20th July 1915 which indicated the importance of Mesopotamia in its relation to Mecca and the whole of the Moslem world. Referring to the situation created by the proclamation of a Jehad, he said: " It was always possible that if we had not then shown our strength *Islam as a whole* might have been deflected against us, It is difficult to foresee what the effect on

Persia and on the *Arabian peninsula* would have been if Islam so far east had declared itself hostile to the Allies. It could hardly have been avoided that *Afghanistan* should also have gone against us. Further, we had to consider the position and prospects of the great Moslem population of *Africa*, which in turn might easily have been aroused against us and our Allies. From those dangerous possibilities, in our judgment, we were *altogether saved* by the prompt move to the head of the Persian Gulf," *i.e.* to *Mesopotamia*.

The two points to which I would draw attention are: first, that the situation which was developing in the Moslem world threatened to become a serious menace to the British Empire; and secondly, this situation was effectively dealt with, from a military point of view, by a moving of troops to Mesopotamia.

Let us examine the two points separately.

1. The situation referred to was clearly that which confronted Great Britain with the entry of Turkey into the conflict, and the proclamation of a "Holy War."

"It was possible," said Lord Crewe—and much more possible than most people at present realise,—"that the Moslem world as a whole might have been deflected against us." What would then have happened if we had failed to deal effectively with this formidable menace, if the "Holy War" had followed the course anticipated by our foes?

India, we must remember, was not absolutely

quiet. "There was serious unrest," said Mr Chamberlain, "at one moment in the Punjab, arising from the return of emigrants not unconnected with German intrigue and conspiracy. We must also remember that there were German plots to provoke risings there and to land arms, which required constant vigilance and watching; and that whilst India was sending great forces abroad, there were between 27th November 1914 and 5th September 1915 no fewer than seven serious attacks made on the North-West frontier." Now there are nearly twice as many Moslems in India as there are people in the British Isles, and Lord Hardinge informed us that, in the absence of armed forces, we were obliged to rely absolutely upon the good-will of our Indian subjects. There were twenty millions of Moslems in Russia, and the activities of the Senussi warned us that the provinces governed by France and Italy in North Africa are filled with some very fanatical sects of Moslems.

I have no hesitation, therefore, in saying that if the worst had happened—and the worst might have happened—there would have been a massacre in India, and the British authorities would have been compelled to withdraw. The Moslems of the Caucasus could have prevented the Russians from penetrating into Persia or Armenia, and Germany, with the aid of the Moslems, could have obtained practical control of the lands that lie between Constantinople and Calcutta. There would also have been an uprising and a massacre in Egypt, North

Africa, and the Soudan, and the whole southern shore of the Mediterranean would have been at Germany's disposal.

Mohammedanism, when aroused by the call of a Jehad, has more than once trampled down some of the fairest fields of Christendom. It arose from the deserts of Arabia, it spread like a consuming fire over the Byzantine Empire, and came to the very gates of Vienna. It trampled down the well-organised Christian churches of Egypt and North Africa, and established itself in Southern Spain. It took possession of the finest Christian cities in Eastern Europe, and it has held Constantinople for nearly five hundred years, in spite of all that millions of Crusaders could do to recover it for Christendom. Now, once again, the Sultan of Turkey used his authority, not as Sultan of the Ottoman dominions, but as "Head of the Faithful," to hurl at the British Empire not only the Ottoman troops but the religious fanaticism of the Mohammedan world. His official proclamation might easily have resulted in a recrudescence of fanaticism, to the ruin of our Empire overseas and the devastation of Christendom.

2. All these developments were possible, and "from these dangerous possibilities," said Lord Crewe, "we were altogether saved by the expedition to Mesopotamia." But why, we naturally ask, should it be possible to deal with the whole Moslem world through Mesopotamia? Is not Cairo or Delhi of more importance to Islam than Baghdad? Yes,

but—and the explanation is full of interest from many points of view. Everybody knows, but most people forget, that the Arab is essentially an Eastern, that Islam is essentially the religion of the Arab, and that Mecca is essentially the centre of Islam.

As an Eastern, the Arab has his own way of looking at things—a poetical and picturesque way, neither logical nor yet unreasonable. The Arab does not despise the West; on the contrary, he has a great admiration for many things Western; but nevertheless, just as no Christian is admitted to Mecca, so also no Western influence is welcome there. Cairo and Delhi are Westernised, the Egyptian and Indian Moslems in the Arabian peninsula are foreigners; and in the matter of guidance the Arab, as a true Eastern, will take counsel only of his own kith and kin. The Shah of Persia once sent to a Bakhtiari chief asking for the hand of his daughter, but all the liveried messengers from the royal court failed to persuade the old man to listen to the Shah's demands. He gave no reason for his refusal: he simply refused. One day the chief met a herdsman of his own tribe and kindred, who said to him, "I hear you decline to give your daughter to the Shah." "Yes," said the chief. "Well, what do you think I ought to do?" "I think you ought to give her," was the reply. "Do you? Then so I will"—and the thing was done.

Now Mecca as the centre of Islam will naturally lead the Moslem world, but Mecca as the heart of Arabia will not willingly be led by anything that is

not Arab. How then could Mecca be reached and effectively persuaded to use its immense influence in the Moslem world as a counterpoise to the Sultan's proclamation of a "Holy War"? No expedition could be landed at Jeddah or taken to Mecca, for this would have precipitated a Moslem revolt, and all communications with Mecca from Jeddah or Damascus must pass under the watchful scrutiny of the suspicious Turk. There was only one other route to the centre of Islam, and Great Britain has been able to keep this avenue open from Mesopotamia for many a year past. There are many highly respectable, pure-blooded Arabs at the head of the Persian Gulf, who, thanks to Great Britain, have not only enjoyed immunity from Turkish tyranny, but have kept in touch with Mecca on the one hand, and, through India, with the Western world on the other. It should be noticed that the first official appointment made by the Shereef of Mecca after the revolt was that of Omar Bey El Farouky, a member of one of the noble Arab families of Baghdad, to be the Shereef's representative in Cairo. Mecca knows Great Britain best from what we have done for a century past in the Persian Gulf and in India. Through the same avenue also came Mecca's introduction to Turkey's latest ally, and she soon learned to distrust and despise Germany, whose evil deeds in the Persian Gulf were as repugnant to the Arabs as the tyranny of the Turk in Syria. Ever since Germany tried forcibly to wrest territory from the

Sheikh of Koweit for the terminus of the Baghdad Railway, and for her own ends stirred up Ibn Raschid to precipitate war amongst the Arab tribes, Mecca has been on its guard against Germany, and with the aid of the powerful Ibn Saood a broad corridor of tribal sympathies with Great Britain has been kept open from Mesopotamia to Mecca.

Actions, especially with the Arabs, speak louder than words. These sons of Ishmael will not often reason with a foreigner, but I have noticed their readiness to become the slaves of our medical missionaries. Invitations from the heart of Arabia reached the mission doctors at Koweit and Baghdad, with offers of hospitality and assurances of a welcome to places where the foot of the "infidel" is not generally allowed to tread. Britain's reputation in Arabia was not dependent upon diplomacy and could not be shattered by intrigues, for it was established upon its righteous dealings for a century past with the Arabs who were resident in India, the Persian Gulf, and the Euphrates valley.

In addition to the regular communications which are ordinarily maintained by the Arabs of Mesopotamia with their kindred in Nejd, and Mecca, there are two important pilgrim routes that start from Nejif, near the Euphrates, and Koweit, in the Persian Gulf. Some of the nomads also, like the great Shammar camel-breeding tribe, migrate from Arabia to the north in the summer, and claim the right to extensive pasture lands as far north as the vicinity of Mosul.

The Arab revolt was definitely announced in June 1916, but at the beginning of 1915 the Shereef of Mecca consulted with the great Ibn Saood of Nejd, and in November of the same year he sent his son on a mission to this powerful chief, for he dared not move against the Turks without the sympathy and support of the Emir of Nejd. It was the Mesopotamian Expedition that brought Ibn Saood to the side of the Allies, and Captain Shakespear sacrificed his life in leading the Arabs of Nejd against the pro-Turkish armies of Ibn Raschid.

There is still another reason why the Islamic world is more or less affected by movements in Mesopotamia. It is the land of holy places, sacred shrines, and venerated Moslem tombs. There are two sacred places near the banks of the Euphrates which are second only in importance to the sacred cities of Mecca and Medina. These are the holy cities of Kerbela and Nejif, where were enacted the tragedies commemorated by the Shiahs everywhere, and in India by the Sunnis and Shiahs alike in the passion play and festival of the tenth day of Moharrem.

The Mujtahid of Kerbela is one of the most influential leaders of the Shiah sect, yet he, with many other distinguished leaders like the Aga Khan, the Sultan of Zanzibar, the Sultan of Muscat, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Amir of Afghanistan, and the Shah of Persia, deliberately refused to support the military despotism of the Turks, and

actually took up arms in defence of the standards of modern civilisation. The Mujtahid of Kerbela sent a telegram to King George congratulating him upon the British occupation of the city of Baghdad, and the Arabic proclamation which was read to the inhabitants was received with unbounded enthusiasm in Mesopotamia. The proclamation declared that our troops had entered Baghdad not as conquerors, but as liberators, to restore to the Arabs the heritage of their forefathers.

When I was last in Kerbela I enjoyed the privilege of a conversation with the chief Mujtahid. I happened to be visiting a former pupil of mine, now the much-respected British Consular Agent of Kerbela. The Mujtahid came into the consulate whilst I was there, and in the course of conversation remarked how great an admirer he was of the British race. He knew nothing of our Army, and little of our Navy, except what thousands of pilgrims that came from India had told him; but from all his visitors he gathered the same impression, that the British authorities were distinguished for their honesty, truthfulness, and justice. He gave me two illustrations from his own experience—one, when Sir E. O'Malley was sent all the way from Constantinople to the city of Baghdad for the purpose of giving a fair trial to a miserable Indian Moslem who had murdered a fellow-pilgrim, when the busy manager of the Imperial Ottoman Bank and other leading Englishmen of the city were cited to form the jury on this memorable occasion. What

trouble and expense for the purpose of dealing justly with a miserable outcast who happened to be a British Indian subject, and what a contrast to the corruption of the Turkish courts! Then, also, he reminded me that a former King of Oudh had, at his demise, left the whole of his private fortune for the endowment of the charities of Kerbela. The annual income from these invested funds, amounting to thousands of rupees, passed annually through the British Consulate-General to the Consular Agent at Kerbela, and was faithfully distributed every year to the rightful claimants without the smallest diminution or loss. Some of it could easily have been "eaten," as the Arabic language would say. "For all the officials of the Turkish Empire," said the Mujtahid, "are gifted with 'sticky fingers.' Whenever money has to pass through their hands, and especially if it should happen to be for charitable purposes, some of it inevitably remains behind. Don't you remember," he said, "that the Sultan Abdul Hamid was once watching a European conjurer who was supposed to be swallowing silver spoons? An ambassador by his side remarked how wonderful it was. 'But,' said the Sultan, 'we can do more wonderful things in Turkey, for I once had a Minister of Marine who swallowed a battleship. The money was provided, the battleship never appeared, and the money disappeared.' But," continued the Mujtahid, "the money from India meets with no accidents"; and he congratulated me upon having established the

only British schools in Mesopotamia, "for," he declared, "your pupil Mirza Hasan lives up to his education, as an honourable representative of British ideals."

This "Mecca" of the great Shiah sect, as it has often been called, refused to respond to the Sultan's "Jehad," and its attitude doubtless had some influence upon the situation in Persia. If British forces had failed promptly to appear in Mesopotamia after the Turkish declaration of war, it is possible that the lying reports of the downfall of the British Empire, so sedulously circulated by the Turks, would have obtained some measure of credence amongst the Arabs, and the two great "Meccas" of Islam might have been reluctantly compelled in self-defence to act quickly and to take the irrevocable step of lending their religious sanction to the Jehad, which would have given the whole Moslem world the most solemn reason possible for siding with our foes.

As far back as 1906 there were Germans who openly declared they would make a tool of Islam in the event of a world war, and with the aid of its fanaticism would fashion the dynamite to blow into the air the rule of the Western powers from Morocco to Calcutta.

The great Pan-Islamic movement was set on foot soon after the Kaiser proclaimed himself in Damascus "the Defender of Islam." Fanatical enthusiasts were then sent from Constantinople to every Moslem state to stir up discontent, to

promote the prestige of Turkey, and to prepare for the great and terrible day when, at the Kaiser's signal, a "Holy War" would massacre millions in the East, while ruthless Huns made havoc of civilisation in the West. Every effort was made to flood Mohammedan lands with proclamations and pamphlets printed in every Mohammedan tongue. They not only emphasised the obligations of a "Holy War" and described the downfall of the British Empire, but they told of German guns bombarding London from Antwerp, of Zeppelins that flew over Petrograd armed with a powerful magnet which snapped up the Czar! To prove to the incredulous that the Germans had really submitted to Islam, illustrations were published of the ruined churches of Belgium which the Germans had destroyed "upon their repudiation of the Christian faith." This is the way the Turks endeavoured to deceive their ignorant Moslem subjects. They and their German masters made a cat's-paw of Islam solely for the furtherance of their own ambitions,

"You must have made a mistake," said the Kaiser to the Turks, "when you made Constantinople the capital of the Mohammedan world. It is too near Russia, too near the confines of Christendom. Ever since you came to Constantinople the Ottoman Empire has been on the wane; you are out of touch with the Moslem world, and the most flourishing Moslem communities are under the protection of Great Britain. Let us crush the British Empire and share the spoils between us.

Leave me to deal with Christendom; give me Constantinople and the highway I need through Mesopotamia to the East, then I will make you rulers of a Moslem Empire greater than any of which you have ever dreamed. Cairo will make you an ideal capital; it is surrounded by Moslem lands, it is near the sacred cities of Mecca, Medina, Jerusalem, and Damascus, it stands in the centre of the Moslem world. There is wealth in Egypt, the Suez Canal is a gold mine, the Khedive will help us, but we must first crush England; together we can do it, for I have the guns and you have the Khalifate. Raise the standard of Islam, stir up the frenzy of a 'Holy War,' slay and spare not, for when the war is holy, murder and robbery are no longer crimes."

Instead, however, of the anticipated revolution, we had that marvellous response of loyalty from India which astonished the world; the tables were turned upon our enemies. The Moslem world was certainly up in arms, but it rose to defend us; princes and chiefs filled our Red Cross coffers with munificent gifts, issued friendly proclamations, and sent hundreds of thousands of Moslem troops to the different theatres of war to fight for England's cause. On the very day the British Indian troops landed at Marseilles, a beautiful poem appeared in *The Times* which told us why our Moslem subjects were with us when Germany told the Sultan they would surely be against us. It was written by Nawab Nizamut Jung, the distinguished Indian Judge of the High Court of Hyderabad, who in a private

letter said: "The object of the poem is to give expression to the real sentiments of the more cultured among the Indians towards a nation to whom they owe all that is best in life."

INDIA TO ENGLAND.

O England! in thine hour of need,
When Faith's reward and Valour's meed
Is death or glory;
When fate indites, with biting brand,
Clasped in each warrior's stiff'ning hand,
A Nation's story;

Though weak our hands, which fain would clasp
The warrior's sword with warrior's grasp,
On Victory's field;
Yet turn, O mighty Mother! turn
Unto the million hearts that burn
To be thy shield!

Thine equal justice, mercy, grace,
Have made a distant alien race
A part of thee!
'Twas thine to bid their souls rejoice,
When first they heard the living voice
Of Liberty!

Unmindful of their ancient name,
Their fathers' honour, glory, fame,
And sunk in strife
Thou found'st them, whom thy touch hath made
Men, and to whom thy breath conveyed
A nobler life!

They, whom thy love hath guarded long,
They, whom thy care hath rendered strong
In love and faith,
Their heart-strings round thy heart entwine;
They are, they ever will be thine,
In life—in death!

When the Maharajah of Bikanir came to London to receive the freedom of the City, he said :—

" Those who will say that India is held by the power of the sword do a grave injustice to Britain and to India. No ; British rule in India rests on much firmer foundations than force. It is based on principles of justice and equity, humanity and fair play. The most wondrous jewel of the British Crown is held through the loyalty and devotion of the people of my country, through the deep-rooted affection and gratitude of millions of loyal and grateful hearts."

Another well-known Indian also wrote in the *Observer* the following striking words :—

" The Imperial patriotism of India's 70,000,000 Moslems shines resplendently against the black background of the Young Turkish folly. Confronted with the one of the most painful dilemmas in the annals of any community, they did not falter in their duty to the Empire. On ground strewn with their sacred shrines, thousands of them did not hesitate for a moment to fight against men of their own religion, carrying the banner of the Caliph of Islam. No community within the Empire had to pass through so fierce a trial or has stood the test so well."

The greatest conflict of the centuries turned out after all to be a " Holy War," though in a different sense from what was intended by Germany when she raised the standard of a Moslem Jehad. It was

a war for great principles, for the liberties we love, the heritage of our forefathers. It was a struggle between new and barbarous conceptions of "Kultur" and the well-known refinements of Christendom.

CHAPTER XIII

MESOPOTAMIA UNDER THE TURKS

I SHALL never forget my first introduction to the traditional site of man's primeval Paradise. I was standing upon the deck of a British steamer proceeding northwards from Basra to Baghdad when the captain exclaimed: "Mr Parfit, this is the beginning of your new parish. There is the Euphrates coming down on our left, and here is the Tigris on the right, while before us we behold Kurna, the traditional site of the Garden of Eden." My heart sank within me, for I noticed that the buildings on shore consisted only of mud dwellings, and I was sadly disillusioned. I observed to the captain: "If this is the Garden of Eden portion of my parish, what will the rest of it be like?" My attention was drawn to a tall flag-staff, by the side of which was a temporary structure of reed mats. The captain informed me that it was the Town Hall of the Garden of Eden, and the governor or "mayor" had but one duty to perform: he collected a tax that was levied upon every fruit-bearing palm. There was a bright green nubbak tree farther along



An old Turkish gun on the ramparts of old Basra. (See page 225.)

the bank, " which," said the captain, " the pilgrims believe is the Tree of Knowledge in the midst of the Garden ; but I don't mind telling you that my father planted it thirty years ago."

The people seemed desperately poor ; they cried out to us, as the steamer passed, to throw them a little food on the shore, and the passengers hurled bread and oranges from the deck of the steamer. The inhabitants are not genuine Arabs, but belong to a degraded class known as the Maadanis. They were miserably clad, and the children clothed in nothing more than sesame oil and a smile. Those who knew Mesopotamia under the Turk could sympathise with the exclamation of one of our British Tommies. When our troops were encamped at Kurna, after a disturbed, sleepless night, he exclaimed to his fellow in the tent : " Oh, Bill, I don't know how Adam and Eve got on in this place with all these mosquitoes buzzing about." " No, indeed," said Bill, " it wouldn't take a flaming sword to drive me out of the Garden of Eden." A Sheffield soldier who had been serving in Mesopotamia was asked how he liked the country, and replied : " They actually called it the Garden of Eden, but you give me Shuffield ! " There was no such thing as a paradise in Mesopotamia under the Ottoman Turk, though from the luxuriant vegetation, the abundance of water, the heat of the climate, and the size of the fig-leaves it was undoubtedly an ideal place for our remote ancestors.

Mesopotamia was an entomologists' paradise,

for nothing seemed to flourish so profusely as the vermin and insect life. An officer wrote home from Kût describing the enormous scorpions that were seen in the trenches. "A great black thing," he said, "walked in with what looked like a young scorpion on its back, which proved to be its spiked tail bent over ready for action." In Baghdad we used to hear the scorpions scrambling about in our "serdabs" at night, and we had to be careful when descending to the lower parts of the house in the dark. We bottled sixty specimens one winter. One of our servants was stung on his bare feet as he was hurrying up the stairs when we had visitors to dinner. He dropped the basin of soup, and howled for an hour as though he was being murdered.

Our church services were held in a large "serdab," or semi-underground basement, and one morning, just after the starting of a hymn, one of the men came forward to tell me there was a scorpion just over my head. We stopped the service for a few minutes while the odious creature was being removed with the aid of a pair of tongs and a dustpan. On another occasion a carpenter was assisting me to prepare my outfit for a long overland journey. The bell tent was unpacked, and as I was adjusting the central pole into the socket a sleepy scorpion crawled out and stung my hand. The carpenter immediately sent off his boy to fetch a kind of cactus leaf, which I vigorously rubbed over the wound, and was quickly relieved from the

intense pain. Our doctors have met with fatal cases amongst small children, resulting from a scorpion's sting.

I was sitting reading one evening in my drawing-room when a centipede crawled out of the garden-pot by my side; and on another occasion, as I was getting into bed, a centipede fell out of the blanket. We have often caught them crawling up the walls of the dining-room; but the scorpions could only be found in the darkest corners of the lower rooms, and if placed in the sun they would run round and round in a circle and apparently sting themselves to death. Mosquitoes were numerous enough, but the sand-flies were everywhere; the common house-fly attacked you in battalions, and a species that greatly resembled it was gifted with a more piercing bite than the average mosquito. Someone has truly said that "the tiniest little insect in Mesopotamia night and day faithfully does its bit." When, in summer, according to custom, we dined upon the roof of the house, our table was often covered with a multitude of winged insects, varying in size from the largest beetle to the smallest may-fly.

One strange result of the continuous floods was the plague of frogs. They literally swarmed by the million in the swamps and pools. They were possessed of an astonishing variety of voices, so that you could hear their squeaking, squealing, singing, and croaking long before you came in sight of the reeds or could smell the odours of their watery home.

Mesopotamia has an evil name amongst medical specialists as being the home of the bubonic plague, which has often spread to other lands from these dreaded regions. Our British Mission doctors were the only medical men who dared, on three separate occasions within twenty years, when the Turks fled from the city, to stay behind and grapple with the desolating ravages of cholera. I once accompanied our doctor to a large village near Mosul, where he found 60 per cent. of the villagers suffering from ophthalmia, and at least 10 per cent. of them had lost their sight. There was not a single municipal hospital or dispensary in the whole vilayet.

I have often listened to the bitterest complaints launched by all sections of the population against the Turkish tax-collectors. A village was ordered to pay one-tenth of its produce to the Government. The tax-collectors, with their escort, were billeted on the villagers for weeks. Worthless receipts were frequently foisted upon the chiefs, figures and dates were constantly tampered with by Government clerks, with the net result that the greater part of the village produce was appropriated by the tax-collectors, and the amount that was left to the villagers was barely sufficient to clothe them in rags and to enable them to keep body and soul together.

I was standing one day on the top of a high mound in the midst of the ruins at Niffer, when the excavator by my side pointed out to me a little battle that was taking place in the distance. One

of the Arab tribes from the south was raiding another Arab tribe from the north, and thousands of sheep were being driven back behind the front line of the marauders. This was a reprisal raid for what had happened a fortnight before, when the northern tribe had raided the southerners and succeeded in stealing about thirty of their camels. The excavator assured me that these incidents were of common occurrence in the central plains of Mesopotamia. There was no security for life and property, no government outside the big towns, and no attempt to exercise authority for the preservation of law and order. On my return journey from Niffer to Diwanieh the Zaptiah guards preceded us in some places with their rifles presented at the bushes on both sides of the road, ready to receive a surprise attack from concealed tribesmen. On the previous day a Turkish official returning from Niffer had been stripped bare of all his possessions by these irrepressible robbers.

On this same journey, when I was returning from the holy city of Nejif to the town of Kufa, on the banks of the Euphrates, I saw six stalwart robbers sallying forth to attack a caravan that was known to be on its way to the shrine. One of the robbers caught hold of a lad who was driving a donkey, flung him aside, and made off with his prize. The lad screamed after him, " Don't steal my donkey ; it is all I have in the world, and I have to support my widowed mother. Don't steal my donkey ! " A Zaptiah guard was riding by my side, so I quickly

drew his attention to the robbery; but, with a shrug of his shoulders, he said he dared not interfere with those men, for they belonged to a gang of some forty robbers who shared their spoils with the Turkish officials. I started off at a gallop, caught up the robber, threatened him with a whipping, and was able to deliver back the donkey to the grateful boy.

Early one morning, whilst struggling through an Arabic lesson with my very fat, dreary pundit, we were startled by a tremendous amount of screaming and shouting from the direction of the river Tigris. I flung my book into the lap of my learned tormentor and rushed to the window of my study, just in time to catch sight of the old Baghdad pontoon bridge, which had broken away from its moorings and was tearing down the Tigris with a group of howling pedestrians upon it. The river had risen quite rapidly during the night; the force of the current had broken the chains and was carrying away the bridge at a speed of about seven miles an hour. It came to a standstill at the end of the reach, where the terrified passengers were able to escape by wading to the shore. At the request of the Wali governor, the captain of one of the British steamers got up steam and went down the river to tow back the runaway bridge. It was a very dilapidated old thing, full of holes and worn-out planks, so that accidents were frequently reported, and to cross the Tigris by the bridge of boats was more dangerous to equestrians or heavily laden porters than a

short voyage from bank to bank in the curious Baghdad coracles.

An enterprising governor at length decided to raise a fund for the construction of a new bridge, so he set to work in accordance with the well-established traditions of Turkish administrators. He mustered his military officers, police officials, and tax-collectors; he gave them authority to scour the villages with whips and thongs, to beat the poor, threaten the rich, imprison the obstinate; to help themselves to all they might need for commission or incidental expenses, and to bring back plenty of wood, with a goodly sum of money, for the construction of the new pontoon bridge.

By compulsory deductions from the salaries of all Government officials and by every kind of extortion the governor succeeded in collecting about £40,000 of so-called "voluntary contributions." He spent about £4000 on the labour and material he was obliged to pay for, and pocketed the rest for his arduous labours in connection with this most beneficent undertaking.

When the bridge was completed, a special day was appointed for a grand opening ceremony, to which all the leading citizens were invited. Every corner of the bridge was bedecked with Turkish flags, and inharmonious bands blared away furiously from sunrise to sunset. In the early morning of this great festival a telegram arrived from Constantinople announcing the deposition of the governor, forbidding him to take part in the

festival, and commanding the General of the Forces to conduct the opening ceremonies. The governor had perhaps offended too many influential people by excessive exactions, and no doubt his superiors were informed of the immense profits he had recently been accumulating, so it was evidently a favourable time to appease the victims of his oppression and to recall him to Constantinople, where he would have to disgorge before securing another appointment.

Three days after this great festival the ex-governor was starting off with his caravan for the overland journey to the capital, when he was molested by a number of courageous citizens who began to steal back from the deposed governor the horses, mules, and other " presents " which he had extorted from them in the form of bribes. They succeeded after a scuffle in getting back some of their property, and the discomfited governor hurried away before other citizens should get wind of his departure.

The great cities of Baghdad and Basra were formerly surrounded by ramparts erected as a protection against the Arab tribes who perpetually maintained a state of war with the Turkish Government all the time it was established in Mesopotamia. Midhat Pasha was a great Turkish reformer, who unsuccessfully attempted to revive the waning fortunes of the Ottoman Empire, and in spite of his large army corps at Baghdad failed to subdue the Arabs or secure their friendship. He demolished the ramparts around Baghdad, and was

obliged to sell the bricks in order to provide the pay for his rebellious soldiery. The dilapidated bastion at the south gate and the miserably dirty moat around the city were all that remained in 1914 of the old Turkish defences. A still more interesting monument which the Turks left behind was to be seen in Basra. When the ramparts of the native town were removed, there was one old-fashioned piece of artillery mounted high upon a corner of the thick mud walls. The Turkish governor concluded it would be too expensive and too difficult to remove, so the unsightly mass remained, and became an object of reverence and worship for the superstitious villagers who passed it whenever they brought their produce to the Basra bazaars. The monuments that commemorate the Ottoman dynasty are so few and are so rapidly disappearing that one feels justified in reoording one's indelible impressions of Mesopotamia in the golden prime of the gentle Turk.

Many of the pre-war peculiarities of the country will fortunately survive the expulsion of the Turk, though even the climate may undergo some modification when the barren wastes have been transformed into fertile fields.

The "ark of bulrushes" is still to be seen at Baghdad. The cauldron-shaped river craft called "guffas" are constructed of branches of the date palm covered with bitumen. They are very cleverly plied, sometimes by two oarsmen, one rowing one way and one the other; but if by one man,

then he must ply the oar first in one direction and then in the other, or else the coracle would go round and round without making any progress.

Most of the busy streets where trade was carried on were covered with bricked arches or reed matting to protect the open-fronted shops from the glare and heat of the sun. The labyrinth of bazaars at Baghdad was more famous, more interesting, and more Oriental than any of the streets of Damascus.

In accordance with the Moslem religion, the Arabs are forbidden to indulge in intoxicating liquors, so they meet together in the coffee-houses for the purpose of sipping small cups of coffee, smoking their narghilehs, gossiping with their friends, or playing at chess, dominoes, and dice. Some of the arabesque work on the chimney-pieces around the open grates, where the coffee is stewed in a variety of beaked copper pots, is extremely well executed.

The climate of Mesopotamia is better on the whole than that of the greater part of India, though the intense heat of the summer is notorious. The average maximum temperature was officially registered as 122° F. in the shade, and it dropped in the winter to a minimum at night of 14° below freezing-point. On one occasion a terrific hailstorm reduced the temperature in four hours by twenty degrees, and some of the hailstones measured two inches in diameter.

The heat at Basra is almost as damp and unpleasant as the heat of Bombay, but at Baghdad

the summer heat is probably as dry as the atmosphere of the Soudan. The thermometer at Mosul often registered ten degrees lower than the temperature at Baghdad, but the city itself is unpleasantly hot, especially at night. The streets are narrow and the houses are built of a grey, porous marble which seems to retain the heat for a much longer time after sunset than the mud walls and brick buildings of Baghdad.

The inhabitants of Baghdad always made use of a Turkish word when referring to the so-called desert around the city. It was commonly known as "Chole," which means a wilderness or desert place; but the people of Mosul always used the Arabic word "Rabia"=spring, or verdure, to describe the surrounding country. This choice of words appropriately expressed the difference between the undulating green pasture-lands of Assyria and the flat, parched plains of Babylonia. There are very few olive trees in Mesopotamia, but extensive fields of millet and sesame are to be found everywhere; the poorer Arabs extracted oil from sesame and used it for their lamps. Rice is cultivated along the banks of the Khabur, and more extensively in the marsh-lands near the lower reaches of the Euphrates.

A curious feature of the soil in some districts around Mosul is the enormous quantity of truffles it contains. It is only necessary to scratch the ground for an inch or two anywhere, and the truffles can easily be found. Hemp and tobacco

are cultivated in considerable quantities. Vast areas are covered with wild liquorice, a rough species of thyme, and the caperberry bushes. The sumach is a favourite tree of great commercial value; the white poplar is chiefly grown for the purpose of providing beams for the roofs of houses; the willow trees and the tamarisk grow plentifully by the waterside. There is no place like Mesopotamia for dates, melons, and cucumbers. I have seen two water-melons large enough to make a small donkey-load, and I once measured a cucumber a yard and a half long. There are plenty of oranges, sweet limes, lemons, pomegranates, quinces, loquots, and small quantities of almost every kind of fruit, nuts, and vegetables to be found in Western lands.

The bird life of Mesopotamia was particularly interesting. There were large quantities of quail, snipe, partridges, bustards, sand-grouse, wild ducks and geese, immense flocks of black crows, and an equal number of storks. I have also seen pelicans, flamingoes, and herons in the south, great quantities of ring-doves at Baghdad, plenty of beautiful jays, and a great variety of smaller birds. There was not much in the way of animal life beyond a few hyenas, wolves, gazelles, foxes, and wild boar; but the nights were made hideous by the yelping of innumerable jackals.

Mesopotamia was always a fascinating country in spite of the Ottoman Turk, who did his best to make it one of the most desolate places on earth.



One of the locks of the Hindiah barrage in course of construction.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LAND OF FLOODS

THE late Dr Driver believed that "the true origin of the Biblical narrative of the flood is to be found in the Babylonian story" discovered at Nineveh by George Smith in 1872. The story evidently assumed a Hebrew complexion and became a symbolical embodiment of ethical and religious truth. It marks a new epoch in the early history of mankind. A judicial motive is assigned for it; it becomes a judgment upon corrupt and degenerate mankind. Noah, on the other hand, is the type of a righteous man—a man worthy of the seal of God's approval. Rescued from the flood of waters, he becomes the second father of humanity, and inaugurates for it a new era.

Mesopotamia has often been described by British soldiers as a land of floods and mud. The floods have disappeared with the exit of the Turks, but the mud remains. Some of the floods were ordinary inundations, some were extraordinary, and some were unnatural in the sense that they were brought about by evil intent or by ignorance and carelessness.

The country was liable to ordinary floods every springtime with the melting of the snows on the mountains of Armenia and Kurdistan, when certain districts of Lower Mesopotamia were invariably inundated.

In 1830 the plague which carried away half the population of Baghdad was followed by a fearful flood that destroyed 7000 houses in one night, and it was estimated that 15,000 people perished. In 1896 an exceptional rise in the river broke down the banks of the Tigris above Baghdad and flooded about 400 square miles of land around the city. It was strange to see so many sailing-ships on the "desert," when the Persian caravans were conveyed in boats for miles across the flood. The "serdabs" of the Baghdad houses contained five or six feet of water, and 1200 of the smaller houses collapsed. My own house on the river bank was substantially built, with walls that in places were six feet thick, but it developed a crack from top to bottom. While it was being repaired I took a holiday and went on a trip to Basra in the river steamer. I well remember noticing that in some places the villagers suffered terribly by the ravages of the floods, losing all their sheep and oxen, and clinging for dear life to some small mound that preserved them from the rising waters. Many of them were taken on board the river steamer as we went by, and they told us how large numbers of their people had been drowned by the inundations. At times it was impossible to see land of any sort on either side of the river, as

the flat country was covered with water as far as the eye could reach, and I wondered how the navigating officers could distinguish the main channel of the stream. Mesopotamia was, in fact, transformed into Katopotamia, for in many places the two great rivers had joined together. More than a million date palms in the vilayet of Basra were destroyed by that flood.

It is a curious fact that a similar extraordinary inundation took place in November 1914, immediately after the declaration of war with Turkey and on the very night that the British residents in Baghdad were interned by the authority of the Wali governor. The British prisoners were all taken to the Residency, and that night their sleep was disturbed by many distressing noises in the town. Sir John Jackson's chief engineer was one of the prisoners. He was aroused from his slumbers by a Turkish official, a carriage was provided for him, and he was taken around the ramparts by the authorities, who begged him to tell them what could be done. He could only reply that they had asked for his advice when it was too late. They had received telegraphic warning from Mosul that heavy rains had fallen and an exceptionally high rise of the river was on its way, but nothing had been done until the river had burst through the banks. The desert was covered with water, the gardens were flooded, and houses were tumbling down on every side, whilst the inhabitants were scrambling forth into the streets with what little

possessions they could rescue from destruction. The next morning there was great lamentation in the city of Baghdàd, and the superstitious quickly declared that it was a judgment upon the authorities for interning the British residents and for fighting against their friends the English.

The Turks, aided by German engineers, utilised the rivers of Mesopotamia as a powerful weapon for waging war against us. They would hardly neglect such an opportunity for offence and defence, and they were no doubt responsible for the "exceptional floods" we heard about when our troops were fighting for Kût 'l Amara, since for fifteen years the German surveyors had been marking out every feature of these battlefields in Lower Mesopotamia.

In 1898 I started out with a caravan from Baghdad in the month of April, to travel along the busy pilgrim road to Babylon and Kerbela, intending to halt for the night at a well-known khan five hours' distance from the city. After about three hours' travelling we found the road was blocked by a flood which compelled us to make a detour that lengthened our journey by four hours, and our destination could only be reached by crossing a rough pontoon bridge hastily constructed by the considerate Turks for the benefit of the thousands of pilgrims who had to pass that way. We were getting ravenously hungry, as our food was locked up in the mule-panniers that were securely tied on the backs of the baggage animals. We did not

anticipate such a long journey, and dared not stop to unpack our mules lest we should be benighted upon a road infested with robbers; so we were deeply gratified when we espied the bridge, and, without the slightest demur, we quickly paid the heavy toll levied by polite Turkish officials and breathed a deep sigh of relief when we found ourselves safe at last on the other side of the flood. What wonderful people these Turks are! how polite when they rob you! We were actually blessing them for making that bridge when we heard a group of Arabs cursing them for having created the flood. The Turks knew the river was rising, and the pilgrim season was in full swing, so they made a breach in the banks of the Euphrates and flooded a depression within twenty miles of the Tigris. They constructed a bridge for a few hundred liras, and reaped thousands of pounds profit by the tolls taken from the pilgrims, besides sharing the spoils with the robbers who stripped the travellers who were benighted along the roads.

The deep, soft mud of the rainy season, the slippery roads and slimy marshes that remained when the floods had subsided, seriously impeded all pedestrian traffic and made our military operations peculiarly trying and difficult. But there was some consolation in the fact that, when the river was high, the oozing of the waters through the soft soil had the effect of driving the ill-clad Turks from their flooded trenches. The "Nazeez" is an interesting feature of the Mesopotamian lowlands. Small lakes

and numerous pools will quite suddenly arise out of the earth like a mirage, and, in answer to your question as to where it comes from, the Arab will simply tell you it is the "Nazeez," which appears in the springtime with the rise of the river. He cannot explain that it percolates from the Tigris through the subsoil, and appears above the surface wherever the land is lower than the level of the river. This phenomenon was probably as much responsible for the flooding of the Turkish trenches at Senna-i-yat as the north-west wind referred to in General Lake's dispatch.

The best drinking-water in Mesopotamia is the muddiest. I do not mean that it is the mud which gives it its quality and flavour, but what I mean is that, because the whole of the drinking-water of Mesopotamia is obtained from the Euphrates and Tigris, this water is at its best when the rivers are rising, just after heavy rains. The current is then swift, the pollutions are quickly carried away, and the water, though the colour of pea-soup, is far less dangerous than when, in the autumn, it looks beautifully clear. Every household in Old Baghdad was provided with a large water-jar of somewhat porous clay. The river water was emptied into the jar, the muddy sediment settled to the bottom, a small jar beneath caught the drippings from the larger jar, and provided the family with sparkling, cool water direct from the old-established Baghdad waterworks.

The whole of Mesopotamia at certain seasons of

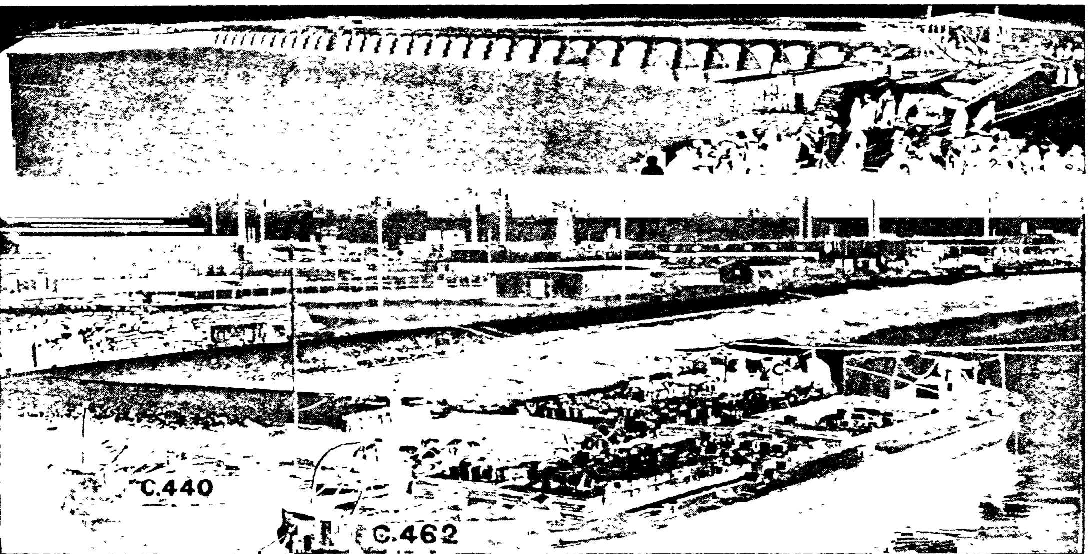
the year is a mass of mud, and after a good shower of rain the streets of Baghdad were impassable for pedestrians. The Europeans generally hired donkeys to take them through the mud from their homes to their offices. An English merchant told me one day that he had been calling upon a sagacious Consul-General who, after a lengthy discussion on a small matter of business, was anxious to get rid of his visitor. He suddenly turned the conversation to the subject of the mud. " Really," said the Consul, " is it true that the streets are so appalling ? I have not seen them. Let us go and look at them." So the two walked out of the office, past the military guard, to the gate of the Consulate. " Terrible, terrible ! " exclaimed the Consul ; " however did you get here ? Oh, this is your donkey, of course—a sturdy beast. Let me help you on, and a safe journey to you through this awful mud ! Good-bye—good-bye ! "

On another occasion, after a week's confinement to the house through heavy rain, the sun shone gloriously in the afternoon, and the doctor and I decided to go for a walk. The middle of the road was still a mass of deep, watery mud, but a very narrow path had been trodden down on either side ; so we crawled along by the walls of the houses, aided by our walking-sticks and the doctor's servant. Presently we reached a spot where the path disappeared and the mud for fifty yards was knee-deep. We saw it was better further on, so the servant, with bare legs, offered to carry us across on his back.

I urged the doctor to go first, and when the servant reached the middle of the morass the burden and the mud together were too much for him and he began to totter. The doctor besought him to stand still and called to me for help. I was so convulsed with laughter at the sight of the doctor doubled up on the back of a tottering Arab in the midst of a sea of mud that I could think of no way of rescuing him. When I recovered a little I ran back and found two bare-legged Arabs, who relieved the servant of his burden and afterwards carried me to the other side. We returned another way by a slightly better road.

A much more serious incident occurred when I was travelling a few miles north of Baghdad. Three Zaptiahs were escorting our small caravan to a village where we were to spend the night, and one of them suggested a short cut that would save us a journey of an hour and a half. The others protested that the mud swamp which intervened was impassable, but the Zaptiah said he knew a path, and persisted in making a trial while we skirted the swamp and clung to firmer ground. Ere long we saw in the distance our venturesome friend sinking deeper and deeper into the mire, and one of our Zaptiahs galloped off to the village to find help to rescue him. It took them nearly all night to extricate him, but his horse had to be abandoned, and it perished in the bog.

Full view of the Hindiah barrage used for controlling the waters of the Euphrates and irrigating the country around Babylon.



A view of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company's refinery at Abadan.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRANSFORMATION OF MESOPOTAMIA

"A MAGIC wand," wrote an officer from Baghdad, "has apparently been waved over the once dreary wilderness of Mesopotamia, for the most remarkably rapid transformation ever witnessed on earth has taken place in the land of Irak."

More than twenty years ago I was lost for four hours on one of the great swamps near the lower reaches of the Euphrates. I was travelling in a small open boat which my Arab boatman dexterously punted along the narrow waterways between the tall reeds. At one end of his punting rod he had fixed a three-pronged spear, with which he cleverly caught the fish that can always be seen near the surface of these shallow, muddy marshes. He became so excited in chasing some rather lively specimens that, just before sunset, he lost his bearings in the swamp. We had a somewhat terrifying experience for the next few hours, punting our way in pitch darkness, until at length we emerged from the reeds and found a foothold for the night on a little island that contained a village of reed huts.

It was in these neglected swamps that British troops fought their amphibious battles. Thousands of native " bellums " had to be constructed and covered with armour plate. They were frequently carried shoulder-high, as the troops advanced from one swamp to another, and ofttimes the soldiers were obliged to wade for miles knee-deep in mud or up to their armpits in water. Immediately after the capture of Kût 'l Amara thousands of labourers and artisans were brought from India, who, with many thousands of Arabs, were employed in repairing the banks of the great rivers and draining the swamps, with the result that there have been no floods in Lower Mesopotamia since the British occupation of Baghdad. A huge embankment twenty miles long was constructed not far from Basra to protect an area of forty-eight square miles where, with the aid of hundreds of professional farmers and gardeners from Madras, wheat-fields, vegetable gardens, dairy farms, and poultry farms began to flourish in a verdant plain, which, until a year before, had been a malarious swamp for centuries. The great new embankments at Zubeir and Shaiba protect the Arab date gardens and so enormously benefit the landowners of a district that was annually inundated by floods. A considerable extension of the date groves is now possible, and profitable vegetable gardens already flourish in the new date plantations.

There are nearly two hundred varieties of dates in Mesopotamia, and the most luscious kinds cannot

possibly be shipped to Europe. Those of the poorest quality are exported in mass for the distilleries of the West, while some better-quality dates have recently been utilised for the manufacture of sugar.

A perfectly wonderful transformation has taken place at the port of Basra. Under the Turkish administration a vast amount of time was wasted by the primitive methods employed in discharging the cargoes of the ocean-going steamers. These were obliged to anchor in mid-stream while native boats came alongside into which the goods were gradually discharged and leisurely carried to the Custom House. The wearisome process of going to and fro with small loads generally occupied eight or nine days before all the cargo was discharged and the ship reloaded. Now, however, there are miles upon miles of magnificent wharves fitted with powerful electric moving cranes, so that all the large steamers can come alongside to be emptied and reladen in as many hours only as it took days to deal with one steamer by the methods of the old régime. There are a large hospital and other fine new buildings at Niameh, below Basra, and the port has grown from the Asshar Creek to a distance of nearly five miles through Machina to Maghil, where a magnificent dockyard, with three wet basins and three slipways, was constructed for the repair of the large ocean vessels and the river steamers, or for the reconstruction of the river craft.

There were no carriage roads in Mesopotamia

when I lived there, except one in Basra, where a beginning was made by the Turks; but for years the road remained blocked at both ends by the mud walls of the Arab date gardens. Hundreds of miles of metalled roads have now been constructed all over the country, and Basra can boast of many excellent carriage roads and of one magnificent concrete road four and a half miles long that joins Basra to Maghil. Electric cars are running, there is a telephone system larger than that of Bombay, and electric light has been installed in all the Tigris cities. This last improvement is not a piece of military extravagance, as some have supposed, for the light has been supplied to the inhabitants of Baghdad, for example, at a price which makes lighting by electricity cheaper than by the oil which was formerly obtained from the refinery at Abadan, and the installations have proved to be commercially profitable.

The town Arabs of the great cities are now taking kindly to factory life, for in addition to the oil refinery, the dockyards, and the repairing sheds, there are ice factories and soda-water factories in all the big towns, also cloth mills and clothing factories at Baghdad and Basra, which turned out most of the khaki that was worn by the troops and the labour corps in Mesopotamia.

The much-needed sanitation was speedily taken in hand, and the sanitary inspector from the city of Exeter transformed the dirty streets of Baghdad into wholesome thoroughfares and banished the

poisonous smells that formerly guided a stranger to the gate of the Government Serai. An anti-fly crusade was carried on with such marked success that in 1919 I was told by an officer from Mesopotamia that there was hardly a fly to be seen in Basra. When this information reached me I was in the city of Cairo, where a callous municipality still dumps its rubbish near the Kasr-'l-Nil barracks, and where every Effendi carries a fly-flip to protect him from the most pernicious plague of Egypt. We have never had a free hand in Egypt, and Mesopotamia can now give points to the village Omdehs of the Nile valley. Some time ago I was presented with a poetic alphabet on Mesopotamia, one verse of which expresses the opinion of our troops before the inception of the anti-fly crusade:

> J is the Jam, with the label that lies,
> And says that in Paris it took the first prize ;
> But out here we use it for catching the flies
> That abound in Mesopotamia.

These magical performances of the Civil Commissioner began at Basra, but the same great work of reconstruction tarried not, as in Western lands, for the cessation of hostilities; it followed hard behind the victorious armies under General Maude. At Kût 'l Amara a young "political officer" collected all the skilled masons who had been employed by the Germans on their Baghdad "railroad of death" and speedily constructed an imposing colonnade bazaar along the river front.

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He re-roofed the dilapidated bazaars, repaired the mosques, erected baths, flour-mills, and ice factories; made new roads, widened and named the old narrow streets, so that Townshend Road, Delamain Road, Norfolk Street, and the like preserve to-day the glorious memory of its brave defenders. Every shoal or mud-bank in the Tigris was converted into a vegetable garden, and while the women pounded rice or winnowed the corn their menfolk were being drilled by an Arab sergeant to English words of command. The only excitement in the old days for the inhabitants of Amara was the weekly arrival of the river steamboats, but immediately after the British occupation this little town became one of the busiest places on the Tigris. British officers called it the "Brighton of Mesopotamia," for the fine river front of well-built, uniform houses, with its popular Parade, presented an imposing appearance, and it became recognised as the most delightful place on the river. The old port was deepened and enlarged, and, in order to prevent the Tigris water from being wasted in the Jehaila Canal, the badly constructed entrance was considerably improved. Thousands of Arabs and Sabeans obtained employment in the enormous repairing sheds, where all kinds of motors, trucks, ambulances, aeroplanes, and locomotives were undergoing repairs. The MacMunn Bridge at Amara is one of the finest of the many new bridges constructed in Mesopotamia. It is 750 feet long, and the movable central portion

can be opened or closed in four and a half minutes. There were only five bridges over the Diala River and only one in Basra when I lived in Mesopotamia; now every creek in Basra has been bridged, the Royal Engineers have thrown 75 new bridges across the Diala, and over 200 new bridges have been constructed across the rivers and creeks of Mesopotamia.

Some of the most striking changes are noticeable upon the tortuous Tigris, now no longer dismal and dangerous as heretofore, but teeming with river craft of all kinds; shallow-draught gunboats policing 700 miles of waterways crowded with transports, hospital ships, merchant steamers, and innumerable motor boats. The British inland fleet in 1919 consisted of 331 transport steamers, 31 hospital vessels, 416 motor boats and motor craft, 46 miscellaneous craft, 624 transport barges, and 162 special barges. In pre-war days there were only six or seven steamers upon the river, whereas in 1919 there were 824 vessels flying the British flag, and 786 barges. It is estimated that the goods landed by the Turks in 1913 at the Baghdad Custom House did not exceed a daily average of 100 tons, whereas in 1919 it was possible for the military authorities to land by rail and water 2400 tons daily at Baghdad.

The most difficult portion of the river for navigation is called "The Narrows," which begin at Kalah-Salah, near Ezra's tomb, where many hairpin bends of the winding river add to the difficulties

created by its extreme narrowness. With the rise of the waters in the springtime it frequently happened that the whole of this district became completely flooded and presented the appearance of a great inland sea. The navigators of the river steamers found it difficult to keep to the channel of the river, and were sometimes able to ignore the current and steam straight ahead, with a man wading in front to gauge the depth of the water. The rise and fall of the Tigris, however, take place very rapidly, and a ship which had wandered from the river course would run the risk of getting stranded and find itself on dry land at some distance from the channel. The whole length of these difficult "Narrows" is now adequately lighted by a special electrical installation, and everything possible has been done, here as elsewhere, to facilitate the navigation of the Tigris. The steamers now travel up and down this difficult and tortuous current with two barges instead of one, with less anxiety to the navigator and with much greater speed and safety than in former days.

Every port in the Persian Gulf has profited enormously by the revival of trade with Mesopotamia. There has been a steady increase in the number of sailing-boats visiting Basra, and the famous shipbuilding yards of Koweit are striving to double their output. Koweit may very possibly become the most important port for Mesopotamia, as preparations are being made to erect suitable accommodation for the largest ocean-going steamers,

and plans have been prepared for the construction of a railway from Koweit to Basra. A powerful suction dredger has attempted to improve the channel across the " Bar," where a semaphore station has been established at a cost of £5833.

Owing to the folly of some of the Sultan's stewards in charge of his crown lands near the Euphrates, the main channel of the great river running through Babylon was generally dry in the summer months. A magnificent barrage was completed just before the outbreak of war by Sir John Jackson's engineers, with a view to controlling the " Hindiah flood " and supplying water for the ruined date gardens of Babylonia. The Turks, however, neglected to make use of this barrage, and just before the capture of Baghdad they attempted to destroy it, but were prevented from doing so by the Arabs of Kerbela, who fought against them and drove them away. A month later numbers of agricultural officials and experts in irrigation arrived from India. The difficulty of instructing the landowners and peasants in proper methods of irrigation was at once taken in hand. Over 100 neglected canals were cleared of silt and new ones made, culverts were constructed, and 300,000 acres of fertile soil were scientifically irrigated for the first time in the history of Mesopotamia, with the remarkable result that a record crop was reaped early in the summer, and nearly half a million tons of grain became available for the Army and the inhabitants of Mesopotamia. In addition to these

initial experiments in irrigation, a large area of fertile land was subsequently brought under cultivation near the banks of the Diala River, on the Khalis Canal.

The cultivators were given every possible encouragement, receiving advances in cash as well as credit for the seed that was supplied, the cattle, the motor pumps, the ploughs and other implements which they needed for their work. These advances in 1919 amounted to £143,440, and the report that was issued by Sir John Hewett states: "There is no ground whatever for the suggestion that Army funds were expended with a desire to provide for post-war developments: they were uniformly expended for the primary object of securing the efficiency and comfort of the Army." These agricultural experiments saved the British taxpayer, in 1918, £143,250 by growing the grain that would otherwise have been purchased for the Army, and in the same year there was also a saving of £121,200 for the chopped straw that had to be provided for the transport animals. This wise provision for local supplies was a great relief to India, where there was a shortage of grain on account of the failure of the monsoon of 1918. It also released a considerable portion of valuable tonnage, it provided for the 80,000 Armenian and Syrian refugees encamped near Bakuba, and it saved the inhabitants of Mesopotamia and Persia from inevitable famine and consequent starvation. If the wise men in Europe had exercised the same

amount of foresight as the military spendthrifts of Mesopotamia, they would have saved millions of lives as well as the millions of pounds spent to bring from a distance the food that could easily have been grown near at hand.

There was an immense political advantage in bringing some degree of prosperity to the fanatical inhabitants of a conquered country. One old Arab sheikh was heard to say: "No other government but the British would take the trouble to bother about our water supplies while they were fighting a big war." The official reports also declared that the health of the troops was largely improved by an adequate supply of much-needed green vegetables and other fresh provisions; they were, in fact, preserved from scurvy and beri-beri, which wrought such havoc amongst the forces and labour corps in the early days of the Mesopotamian campaign.

Twenty-five years ago I took a photograph of a group of reed-mat dwellings on the banks of the Karûn River near Mohammerah, where to-day are the magnificent offices and buildings of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. In addition to these offices there are other groups of buildings and oil-tanks connected with the refinery farther south, at Abadan, which cover an area of over two square miles of land, where nearly 9000 men are constantly employed. The crude oil is brought from seven different wells through 200 miles of pipe line. It was twenty years ago that I also secured photographs of some

of the primitive oil-refineries which belong to the Bakhtiari chiefs, who derived very small profits from their elementary methods of refining a little oil. They are to-day much better off, large numbers of their people have regular employment, and the Persian Government itself has been saved from bankruptcy largely by the development of these oil-fields. On the outbreak of war the Germans incited the Bakhtiari chiefs to seize the oil-wells. They argued that the chiefs would be better off if the oil-wells entirely belonged to them, and they, of course, offered to lend their assistance in scientifically working the wells; but the wiser men pointed out to the Germans that they had no ships on the seas, and without a fleet the oil could not be sold. In a recent report of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company the chairman gave some remarkable figures, and stated that, although a comparatively small area of the fields embraced in the Company's concessions had thus far been developed, yet the output from seven wells is already larger than the pre-war production of the whole of the Roumanian and Galician oil-fields, where £40,000,000 sterling has been sunk and more than 2000 wells opened. It was said, moreover, that the quality of the Persian oil is better than the Roumanian and Galician oil. The crude product is rich in benzine and kerosene; it yields good lubricating oil, fuel oil of high thermal efficiency, and first-rate paraffin wax. The wells are now yielding 5,000,000 tons a year, and the extraordinary rate of output is

likely to be well maintained; almost the whole pipe line has been twice relaid with pipes of larger capacity, so there is now a 10-inch pipe line of over 150 miles long. The Company has allocated £5,000,000 for the construction of a refinery near Swansea in South Wales; it has acquired the shale oil-fields in Scotland; it owns quite a good fleet of oil-ships, and it has increased its capital funds to £20,000,000. It is believed there are still more valuable oil-fields in other parts of Mesopotamia, and it is probable that the oil-fields north of Baghdad will prove to be some of the most valuable deposits in the world. I once came down the Tigris from Mosul upon a raft of inflated sheepskins, when we passed by a rock in the middle of the river, not far from Gyara, out of which there flowed a copious stream of oil that polluted the river for many miles below. An aerial survey of the Syrian desert has been made with a view to ascertaining the best route for an oil pipe line from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean Sea.

Baghdad, that in pre-war days was a dirty, disorderly city, decimated and impoverished when the British entered it, has now become a bustling hive of activity. The dark, narrow streets that were so badly illuminated by feeble little oil-lamps are now well lighted by electricity, and the main thoroughfare which runs through the town has become a well-metalled motor road. There is an excellent police force guarding the city and regulating the traffic, and to the astonishment of the Arabs

there is an efficient fire brigade, a thing unheard of under the Turkish administration. The picturesque water-carriers have almost disappeared. It was nothing uncommon to see these men by the riverside scooping up drinking-water with a leather scoop and pouring it into the sheepskins, while at the same time a little higher upstream there would be women washing dirty clothes or men having a bathe; but the Baghdad water supply has now been vastly improved, and regular waterworks convey the well-filtered element through pipes, as in the West, to the dwellings of the inhabitants. The Baghdad mosques have been repaired, all the roads have been properly relaid and metalled, many elementary schools have been opened, also a technical school and a training school for teachers. Another much-needed innovation gives untold pleasure to pedestrians: water-carts to lay the blinding and choking dust of the summer months were things unknown to the civilised Turk. The ever-active sanitary squads have cleansed the city of its noisome smells, though a selection of savoury odours remains in its labyrinth of bazaars. It is no longer possible to meet a variety of sick, wounded, and starving animals, covered with sores, for they can now be received into a home where they are properly tended, and only when well are they handed back to their owners.

The *Baṣra Times* is a flourishing newspaper published in Arabic, Persian, and English, while in Baghdad there is a Government Press that gives

publicity to everything that might prove interesting and helpful to the people. It openly publishes the amount of revenue that has been raised, the sources from which it has been obtained, with details as to how the money is being spent. It reports upon the progress of irrigation schemes and improvements in agriculture; it gives advice on a variety of mercantile subjects, details of schools available for the children and the many municipal hospitals that have been opened for the sick.

The most striking achievements of the Civil Commissioner and his staff are the most difficult to describe. They have largely succeeded in bringing about the moral reformation of a people that was despised by the Turks and treated as swine by the Germans. Tribal warfare has given place to satisfactory methods of arbitration, and one day's conference with the disputants suffices to settle a boundary quarrel which in olden times required a year's fighting, frequent raids and punitive expeditions. The Arab chiefs are loyally co-operating with the new administrators, for there is plenty of water to be had for their fertile land, plenty of markets available for their produce, and cheap transport by rail, river, or road, numbers of hospitals for their sick, schools for their children, and impartial justice for all. The most desolate country in the world is being rapidly transformed into something like a paradise once again.

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